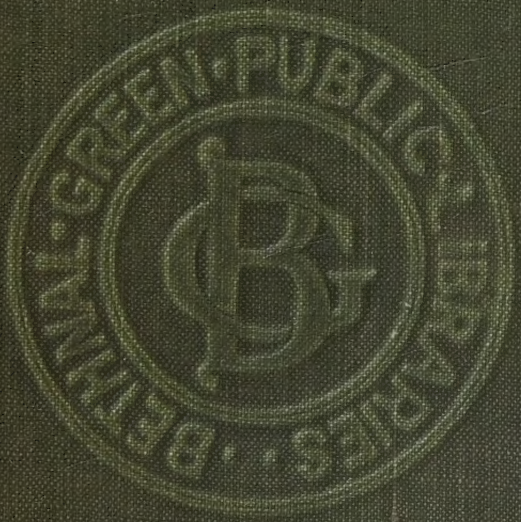
Ireland — a Catspaw

Elizabeth Lawyby



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TO

MY BROTHER JACK

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FOREWORD

The following chapters are a faithful record of a journey through Ireland during certain fateful months of the year 1922. The adventure was impelled by curiosity, idle enough, but not surprising when one considers the prominence which had been given to Irish affairs since the Easter Rising of 1916. "The Playboy" had indeed kindled the imagination of the Western World, and in New York particularly we had become stifled with the dust created by the changing winds of Irish fortune. Nevertheless it became the fashion to lavish attention and money on the leaders of this propaganda. Yet there were some few natives of that verdant soil who writhed before the antics of their fellow-countrymen, and insisted that this wealth of propaganda was eating into the heart of their country as a maggot eats into the heart of a beautifully rounded apple. . . .

My curiosity was piqued. I resolved to explore for myself the minds and hearts of the sons and daughters of the Gael. To reward me I have a collection of odd, vivid pictures which flash upon me suddenly, and will not soon be forgotten.

Some of them are golden as Irish butter, and others are dark as the waters of Dublin's Liffey. What follows in these pages is by no means the end—merely the tale of a quest scarcely begun, which is there for others to take up, as each year in different lands the furrows are cut deeper and deeper.

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Whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first drive mad.

LYCURGUS.

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IRELAND—A CATSPAW

CHAPTER I

A JOURNEY—MAY 1922

As the Irish Mail slipped out of Euston, a tension hanging over the occupants of the long line of carriages manifested itself in the unusual alacrity of the guards and the strained look of those waiting on the platform to wave their good-byes. The hubbub, subdued against the roar of London, reflected the knowledge that all was not well on the other side of the Channel. As we gathered speed my own interest became more urgent. Before my mind's eye was the picture of a smiling country, the fresh green of its hills broken only by an occasional white cottage, which I had seen from a transatlantic liner as my father and I had steamed along the Irish coast one sunny day many years before. The flavour of strawberries, sold on great cabbage leaves at Queenstown, still lingered in my memory, recalling the soft enticing flattery in the voices of their vendors. How the sun had glowed as it fell lower and lower behind the hills, coloured even for my youthful eyes with romance and adventure!

Busy with these thoughts, I scarcely realized the

presence in my carriage of another passenger. With a slight start I encountered two grey eyes studying me intently. The usual remarks of fellow travellers passed between us.

"You are going to Ireland?" he ventured, as he lighted a cigarette.

"Yes," I answered, "I am going to Ireland."

To his second query, "Is this your first visit?", I replied in the affirmative. Although Irish himself, he was puzzled that a stranger should journey to so agitated a spot. I explained that I was from America, that I knew nothing of Ireland or its problems beyond the conflicting reports of the newspapers and a few Irish acquaintances, and that curiosity had impelled me to see things for myself.

"What is it all about—are things bad now?" I queried.

He threw up his hands and launched into a monologue. "Bad now, they have gone mad, my dear lady, quite mad. I lived in Ireland all my life until the war. Of course, I enlisted then and went out to France. When the war was over I stayed with the Army. I am back now in Ireland with my regiment, but I wish to God I were out of the place. France compared to Ireland was a haven of rest any day.

"*They* don't know what they want nor does anyone else. Mad, they are, clean mad."

Once started there was no stopping him. He seemed unstrung: certainly he was sick of his job and bitterly antagonistic toward the inhabitants of the country he obviously loved. To my amaze-

ment and, I confess, amusement, he told me not to venture to the South or West.

"But why," said I; "surely a stranger would be unmolested?"

To which he replied with emphasis, "It is but the devil himself who walks unafraid in Ireland to-day."

It crossed my mind that the war might have left him a little shell-shocked, so pity replaced an impulse to laugh. At Holyhead we parted. As we shook hands he was still repeating—"Mad, my dear lady, clean mad."

I lost sight of him in the confusion of having our luggage examined for arms, nor did I see him again when we boarded the vessel, but his words were to recur to me many times in the months which followed.

On the ship the same gloomy tension prevailed. I scrutinized the passengers. For the most part they were priests and boyish-looking young men wearing trench coats and slouch hats, their faces all remarkable for a curious intentness of expression. As a rule they travelled in twos and threes, and when they spoke it was with lowered voices. How strange, how fantastic, it seemed!

Some hours later, in the light of a cold dawn, we saw the dim outline of the Irish coast. My comfortable reminiscences of the preceding evening were, temporarily at least, dismissed by the chill of those early morning winds. At Dun Laoghaire (Kingstown) I did not take the Dublin train, for I was due at Kiliney for breakfast, and Kiliney,

although not far from Dublin, can be reached from Dun Laoghaire by a more direct route.

As I tramped from the station to my destination, I thought again of my friend in the train, and this time laughed aloud at his melancholy forebodings. The glory of the dawn still lingered over the distant hills of County Wicklow, and the spring flowers filling the gardens by the roadside nodded gently in the breeze. The postman going his rounds was the only soul in sight. Could any country have been more leisurely, more peaceful ?

However, I was struck by the cautiousness of my hostess' servant, who, I noticed, took care to slip from the back regions to a shaded corner of the garden, where he looked me over carefully, before unbarring the front door. Once assured, his hospitality knew no bounds, and as the hour was yet early, he graciously led me to a fire and breakfast before admitting me to his mistress' presence.

Old age in distress has in it something peculiarly moving, especially when it is in one on whom the years have placed a kindly grace. The sight of it in my hostess convinced me at last, despite the beauty of the morning, that I had come to a country of sorrow. Well over seventy, she had been an invalid for years, and wept unrestrainedly as she confided her recurrent fear that her husband, when he left home in the morning for Dublin, where he served on a Special Land Commission, might not return to her alive in the evening. There was this friend and that who had lost their home, a husband or a son—sometimes both—why should

she be spared ? . . . "And I am an Irish woman, born here, my people before me for generations ; thousands feel as I do, but we are powerless to save the country we love ; we have to sit passively watching it ruined by irresponsible people."

Later, a sister joined her, whose restraint was more poignant than the other's tears. They told me of one outrage following another, stories of horrors, all first-hand, the trials of their immediate friends. While I was sobered, I was still incredulous. Were these not the bogies of wearied, nerve-strained minds ?

When, at length, I reached Dublin late that afternoon, the cold sunshine of the early morning had melted into a steady downpour of soft spring rain. Such an atmosphere augmented the impression that I had come to a furtive and whispering city. The old cabby who conveyed me to my hotel took his fare silently, without sign of recognition, and as silently resumed his way. The young ladies at the hotel desk were smiling but cautious. The waiters in the lounge, who brought tea and refreshment, vouchsafed only an anxious attention. A chambermaid, with subdued excitement in her eyes, did open her heart to tell me how Americans had helped their cause.

"Sure and I'm a Free Stater," she said, "for isn't the Free State the steppin'-stone for the Republic ? "

Thus early, however, I found there to be differences of opinion, when another chambermaid

declared the only peace they would get would come when the British should return!

In the evenings few ventured forth. Fusillades of shots occurring at intervals after sundown, indicated that precautions must be observed. Instead, the guests—and there were many, for the races were in progress—sat in the lounge eyeing each other curiously and rarely speaking above a whisper.

Before many days had passed, I found that I, too, had caught the infection and was engaging in this game of cat and mouse. Sitting in the lounge for tea, I spent many an hour watching the little things, the comings and goings of people, their expressions, conjecturing their past and their present, and the share of each in this ancient of dramas.

Only in this way could I "study the naked shape of modern history as she is never written . . . And . . . piece together a dozen assorted facts into a true story that is worth more than all the printed histories and all the guide-books added together."

A woman who was always to be seen knitting on a particular sofa from which she could observe the front entrance of the hotel and note those who entered or left, piqued my interest. She reminded me of Madame La Farge, sitting in her little pastry-shop, knitting away the tortuous hours of the French Revolution. The touch of unreality which crowds itself on one's consciousness in Ireland, tinged with romance an impression which could only otherwise have been sordid and displeasing.

These thoughts were arrested by the appearance on the Sabbath morn—my first in Ireland—of a most attractive family, who proved to be the owners of a mansion not far from Dublin. The previous night at eleven-thirty, they had been aroused by armed men, who bade them leave their place immediately.

" Ye'll be afther havin' an hour to clear away to Dooblin," the leader had informed them, " and ye'll be afther leavin' the sarvents to look afther thim that is comin'."

They obeyed—there was nothing else to do. So they stood, all their material possessions, bar the clothes they stood in, gone in one short hour. Their calm seemed impenetrable, although sometimes I fancied I saw tears dimming their eyes. Yet, they had their lives. . . . The same Sabbath afternoon, the father of the family was hastily getting off business letters, in readjustment of his affairs, at his club in Kildare Street. He felt something cold pressing the back of his neck. Thinking his friends were playing a practical joke, he turned about-face, to look down the cold muzzle of a revolver. Rory O'Connor had found it necessary to take the Kildare Street Club.

That night, or rather in the small hours of Monday morning, I was awakened by screams beneath my window. There floated up the sound of raised voices, but the screams continued, penetrating the silence of the night. A shot, followed by dead quiet, sent me running to the window. Straining through the darkness, I could just distinguish figures half

dragging, half carrying something limp. A few moans, the slam of a door, and night shrouded the incident, I suppose for ever. Of all the horrors I had seen in France during the war, none had shocked me more completely, and in the hours which followed, no romantic yearnings would cloak the thoughts which rushed upon me. Surely some evil genius possessed this little people. Of its nature and extent, however, I was then but dimly aware.

CHAPTER II

DISMAY—SUSPICION

Events in Ireland during these spring days were following one upon the other so fast and in such numbers that pursuit of them became a constant activity. They had arisen from the negotiations which culminated in the Treaty of December 6th, 1921; the Treaty which was to split the Sinn Fein party in Ireland and convince the outside world, especially the United States, that the Irish "question" was settled once and for all.

The refusal of de Valera and his supporters, some of whom had represented him in London, to ratify the Treaty, on the ground that it was signed under threat of "immediate and terrible war," was followed by the resignation of de Valera as President of Dail Eireann, the election of Arthur Griffith in his stead, and the formation of a Provisional Government under the leadership of Michael Collins. Simultaneously, there occurred a break in the ranks of the Irish Republican Army, one section of which formed itself into the "Irregulars" under Rory O'Connor, of and for the Republic, while the other remained with the Free State.

For weeks the situation drifted. Apparently Collins hesitated to take harsh measures against those leaders who, a few short months before, had

been working side by side with him in a joint struggle for the Republic. Yet, to quote Stephen Gwynn, the Irish historian, " the mutineers in the Army were deliberately adding to provocation in Ulster, and a furious vendetta between Protestant and Catholic raged in Belfast. In other parts of Ireland, Protestants became the objects of attack. There was a definite attempt to provoke British armed intervention, in the hope that both sections would unite to oppose it." [1]

These same " mutineers," led by Rory O'Connor, in April seized the Four Courts—home for centuries of Irish law—not only because such a situation was of strategic importance in the City of Dublin, but with the avowed intention of crippling all legal procedure. To entrench himself further, O'Connor occupied other points of vantage in the city. He kept his supporters alive by helping himself to foodstuffs from markets here, there and everywhere, for which " chits " were given in the name of the Free State Government. Raiding banks for funds, and preventing the distribution of certain newspapers, wherever it was felt the influence of such a newspaper was injurious to the Cause, were some other of his varied activities.

I watched half a dozen of these Irregulars take a small club-house, not far from St. Stephen's Green, one evening. A simple matter of a few armed youths marching unopposed through the front and back doors. A crowd gathered. Furniture, carpets, all portable articles in fact, were

[1] *History of Ireland*, by Stephen Gwynn.

thrown against the windows, to be replaced as soon as possible by sandbags and other paraphernalia of warfare. The Free State troops followed up with an attack, half-hearted however, riddling the doors and windows with bullets. But as a rule on such occasions the Insurgents were left alone, while the police and troops, with studied unconcern, looked in another direction.

Meantime, the representatives of these adversaries, as well as many of the principals themselves, were meeting several times a week in Dail Eireann, which, as the Sinn Fein "Assembly of the People," had been holding secret sessions since January 21st, 1919, but which was now the official designate House of Commons for Southern Ireland. Why de Valera sent Arthur Griffith as head of the delegation to represent Sinn Fein at the conference in London, instead of going himself, few can say; or what would have been the eventual outcome had de Valera been directly responsible for the Treaty which transpired. Although Griffith was the titular head of the new Government, Michael Collins, as Minister of Finance and later as Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army, remained to the end of his life its most dominant figure. De Valera and his followers in this final drama retired to the Opposition benches in the Dail, and thence hurled invective at their former associates.

Roughly speaking, there were at this time three distinct factions in the political arena of Southern Ireland. The first and largest stood behind the

Free State, sympathetic to and desiring the fulfilment of the Treaty. The second included that group of Republicans who wished an agreement between the extreme factions on either side; who believed the Treaty would eventually lead to a Republic. The third, or "Irregulars," were die-hard extremists, who declared they would never give in to a union with Great Britain on any terms.

Apart from these three clearly defined groups, there were the old Nationalists, now strong for the Free State, and the Unionists. These last, doing nothing active, had accepted the Free State as, in their minds, the lesser of two evils. There was also Labour, quietly trying to wedge itself in where it could serve its purpose best, but already there were signs of a division in these ranks.

The Treaty had stipulated for an election to be held early in June, but the Republicans, claiming that Dail Eireann no longer represented the people, demanded that there should be a new register of voters before such an election should be permitted to take place. The Free State, knowing the country stood behind them, was anxious to make the first possible appeal, but de Valera, inspired, as events proved, with a like knowledge, bitterly opposed such a step. While the fight in the Dail hinged on this largely technical point, the real question uppermost in the minds, not of the Deputies alone but of the country as a whole, was whether civil war was or was not to be the final method of settlement.

These facts in mind, I turned my attention to a

closer scrutiny of the atmosphere surrounding them: the intrigues, and wheels within wheels, of which outward events are but the bare skeleton.

Wandering about the streets of Dublin did not remove the impression of sordidness, coupled with an indefinable sense of unreality. Dirt in some sections deteriorated into squalor, which sunshine could mellow but never obliterate. Yet to complete the illusion, a child would suddenly appear in the most unkempt of doorways, her little skirt hanging in tatters against her bare legs, her hair a tousled, matted mass, but in her eyes a look as dreamy, as far away as the blue depths of heaven itself. Here was the soul of Kathleen ni Hoolihan, fit subject for the poet of all ages. — During the war I was once able to help a young Irish lad, a few days past his eighteenth birthday, to get his ticket for "Blighty." He had the face and features of a Botticelli angel, his expression mingling the mischievous innocence of a choir boy with the dreaminess of all that is loveliest in Ireland. His thanks, "My mither will bless ye all the days of her life," spoken in a low musical voice, more than repaid me for any trouble I might have taken. It comes back to me now as I write. In those soft even tones was the real essence of Ireland's charm, the laughter and the tears of her.

There was plenty to satisfy one's curiosity and humour in Dublin, "the Dead City," during these May days of 1922. Policemen traversed the streets in pairs. A chance shot going off near them usually

found them walking briskly in another direction. One day I asked one of these stalwart gentlemen the way to the General Post Office. He grinned blandly, and advised me to " thry the other officer standin' at the next corr-ner." The " other officer " referred me whence I had come, so with equal good humour I resorted to a map of the city. Confusion was increased by two names on the sign-board of each street, the Gaelic written above its English equivalent.

Mentioning the post office reminds me of the lumbering post-wagons, some of which had been painted a vivid green, Gaelic letters in gold decorating the centre of each side, while others retained the old red, dirty with age and still with a large gold " G.R."—Georgius Rex—on either side. A driver of one of these wagons sagely remarked, " They'd better not waste any more green paint until the hids of the Governmint stopped givin' each other black oies." The post-boxes, most of which had been repainted green, still retained the " G.R." in raised iron. This, I understood, could not be removed without recasting the box entirely, an expense which the Provisional Government was unwilling to incur.

Noticing an old be-medalled guard, as I passed a Government building one morning, I stopped to question him about his ribbons. He assured me they were the accumulation of many years. Queen Victoria, " and a gr-r-r-and old woman she was," had given him his first, to which he had since added the service stripes of the Boer War and the Great

War. As I turned away, he resumed his walk back and forth before the office of the Provisional Government, for whom he would doubtless do his duty as amiably as he had done it for her late Majesty.

Numbing the hearts of the rank and file was a sense of bewilderment, fast converting itself into hopelessness. There was an evident reluctance, too, to express sympathy for one side or the other. Although public opinion as a power was dead, a general feeling that the agitation was political, each leader trying to grasp his share of the spoil, made itself felt. For Rory O'Connor's economic boycott against Ulster had had its effect. Trade had fallen off badly. Rumour and excitement did something to alleviate this depression, but seldom was either a trustworthy guide.

At first I, too, came to share this general perplexity. A daily walk down to the Four Courts showed the place seething with activity, and constantly being reinforced with quantities of barbed wire and sandbags. It was said that men were being recruited and trained, day and night, behind those sombre walls. Groups of people, the women with shawls over their heads, stood looking helplessly on, murmuring to each other with many nods and great solemnity, conviction written on most faces that such a state of affairs boded ill for the future. Sometimes one overheard the question, "Why does the Government wink at all this?"

Meantime the anarchy spread farther and farther afield. Each day more houses were burned; each night more deaths were caused by armed raiders.

Such things were going on in the most remote sections of Ireland as well as in Dublin. Creameries were destroyed, barracks were attacked, and ambushes struck terror into the hearts of all casual wayfarers. As to the responsibility, there was controversy. The Republicans said it was the Provisional Government inspired by the British, while the Free Staters put entire blame on the shoulders of the Extremists. It was whispered that Collins was preparing a Republican Constitution: was he, at the eleventh hour, to shift his weight to the Republicans? So far I had not seen him; therefore such a possibility only seemed part of a most intriguing problem. Perhaps, because I was but a spectator and hardly understood how things were done in Ireland, the whole situation seemed to me pregnant with disaster.

The most puzzling aspect was the wish, reiterated so constantly in Republican circles, for the British to return, and a strong desire for something to happen which might hasten their return. My astonishment was somewhat lessened when I reminded myself of the strange psychology of this people. The conviction of the stranger in the train that a strain of waywardness amounting to madness ran in those of Irish blood was perhaps not far from the truth.

I might well have accepted this thought had a suspicion not already crossed my mind that behind these untoward events, piling one upon the other for six years and now reaching their climax, were influences who had seen fit to direct the emotional idealism of Ireland's youth for purposes only

indirectly connected with Ireland's destiny. Amid the rumour and party strife, one impression gradually grew into a conviction, that not merely was the movement thoroughly organized, but upon it much money and much thought had been and still were being expended.

CHAPTER III

MOIRA

A MORE friendly place than Dublin could not well have been imagined, even in these turbulent times. Time is of no consequence to the Irish. Because they can still allow themselves leisure to enjoy the delights of human intercourse, the *salon* survives, reminiscent of a day long passed in other countries. Such thoughts were in my mind as I sat watching the animated group who had collected one Sunday evening at Æ's (George Russell).

The house itself was small and furnished with an almost frugal simplicity. Ranged along two sides of the front room, placed one against the other, were paintings by Æ himself; strange, fantastical creations of gnomes and fairies, sprites which invite and elude their author on a country-side. This gentle figure was the centre of the gathering, to many minds the pivot of Irish intellectual life. He is large in build, ungainly in form, and his hands, long, thin, delicate, are the sole outer clue to the elfishness of his spirit. A dreamer pure and simple, he could not reconcile the use of force with his aspirations for an Ireland free and spiritually enriched. On this Sunday evening it was almost with a sense of doom he expressed the shattering thought " that Kathleen ni Hoolihan had survived

seven hundred and fifty years of British rule only to be killed by six months of Irish." James Stephens, the poet, answered him merrily enough, "Ah, these are but the growing pains of young Ireland!"

There was a general laugh, desperate in some cases. They did not all think alike, these people. The particular vehemence of Mrs. Russell recurs to me. She was of a more practical turn of mind than her husband, and with alarming frankness showed her keen disgust over the turn events had taken.

For the rest there were the Dillons, father and son; several youthful poets, women as well as men; Mrs. Figgis, the wife of Darrell Figgis, at that time a member of the Free State Government; and the inimitable James Stephens, whose small round face bore so striking a likeness to Goldsmith's. There were many more, men and women whose names will live in the artistic or literary annals of their time, all interesting and interested, content to gather together for a cup of tea and a good chat. For dreams, too, but in Dublin, City of Dreams and Sad Laughter, there was little dreaming done that night.

On one side of the fire, deep in the shadows, sat a quiet woman with shining eyes, who smiled much but said little. Though she was employed on the clerical staff of the Free State Government, I knew her to be the intimate friend and confidante of Mrs. Erskine Childers, who with her husband ranked high in the counsels of the Republicans. On this

particular evening, for a reason wholly inexplicable, her peculiar reticence caused me to associate her with vague apprehensions, which for some days had been forming in my mind. Several times I shook away the impression, only to have it return with tenfold emphasis as the conversation twisted and turned. Fantasy, perhaps, speaking through Æ's strange, eerie pictures, warning me of this land of poetry and witchcraft!

The informality, the friendliness of that gathering, despite the clouds which hung so ominously, increased as the evening passed, and remain among my most delightful recollections of Dublin. They discussed poets new and old, or hung breathless for fresh gossip on the political situation. Æ, greatly concerned for the farmers, ruminated on the old days in County Donegal, while his wife punctuated his sentences by poking indignantly at the grate, interjecting the reflection, "Republicans will not fill the coal buckets." As the evening wore on one or two young men dropped in, who were engaged in mapping out the new Constitution. From their expressions, I fancied their reluctance to discuss any aspect of this important document was more than the mere execution of a duty.

I rode back to my hotel on the tram with one of the guests, a shy, ardent youth, who told me of the glories which were coming to this new Ireland after seven hundred and fifty years of spiritual starvation.

"The time will come when Irish will be the universal language, and English will die out, and

all the wondrous beauty of the real Irish music will entice the fairies from their secret places. A new literature will be born from the old, and the school-children will be taught to revere only what is their own. It is abominable how our histories have been tampered with and changed. Free, we should rule the world ! "

The following few days, wherever I went I ran into my friend of the quiet, shining eyes. Her first name was " Moira," and so I shall call her. As I got to know her better she told me of her activities for Sinn Fein during the months and years prior to the Treaty. Until the 1916 Rebellion, she had been blind to the glories of her country, but once awakened she had worked unreservedly for a Republic. For months, which lengthened into years, she and her associates were established in cellars underground, shifting if their concealment was suspected, their thoughts diverted by the mundane problem of keeping their retreat clean. They resorted to camouflage. On one occasion the hiding-place was arranged as a bookies' office, and the old man who came to clean was offered a tip for the next horse race. Luck was on their side. The horse won. Some weeks later the same old soul met Moira in the street, and blessed her over and over for the tip which had brought him good fortune.

I have mentioned Moira's devotion to the Childers and their children, the elder of whom, a fine lad of fifteen, spent much of his holiday time in her company. One evening, accompanied by young

Erskine, Moira and I went together to call on Madame Maud Gonne McBride, for many years a romantic figure in Dublin, who was at this moment in the unenviable position of having one son in the Four Courts and another in the Free State Army. Nominally it was this lady's evening at home. She had departed for the country, however, at short notice, and the house, usually such a centre of life, was completely deserted. Nevertheless, we made ourselves at home in her sitting-room, and sat on in the darkening twilight.

As the clock ticked away the moments, my companions multiplied their tales, until time and place alike were forgotten.

Moira dwelt with horror on some weary days she had spent in a lonely cottage on the outskirts of Dublin, caring for a boy in the I.R.A., wounded and half crazed with delirium. A doctor who sympathized had operated, and for days afterward she trembled lest the screams of her patient should attract passers-by. Such was the burden borne by the women during the years following the Easter Rebellion, yet they proved themselves equal to this most trying difficulty of shielding their wounded and the men "on the run."

On another occasion, she had carried two loaded revolvers to another member of the I.R.A., a prisoner in Mountjoy. She hung them cleverly beneath her skirts, knowing women visitors at the prison were but lightly searched. How she chuckled at the neat manner in which she had eluded the guards and managed her friend's escape!

"Mick" (Michael Collins)—they had loved him, looked up to him, before he had been "bought over" in London; and Rory, dark horse in the struggle with the British; Sean Moylan, arch-revolutionary but gentle in his ways; Liam Mellowes; "Conny," the Countess Markievicz, whom every tram driver in Dublin knew and loved, and consequently would never betray if she sought their aid when she was "on the run." If those days were only back—if the British could be *forced* to return; with them would come the old, happy, adventurous life!

Though they, Moira and young Erskine, would have none of it, it was apparent to me that Michael Collins still held their minds and, to a large extent, their hearts. They gloried in his fearlessness and daring, and one could read passionate resentment at what they termed "his betrayal." As the dusk gathered into darkness about us, I could just dimly see their faces, Moira's dark and furrowed, young Erskine's fair and eager, each trying to outdo the other in tales of "Mick's" past exploits. A greater price had been offered for his capture than for that of any of the rebels. For he had built up an intelligence system superior, in the opinion of many persons, to that of any other country; when occasion demanded, he killed remorselessly, adding daring deed to daring deed. One of their stories particularly clings to my memory. While "Mick" was on the run a report was sent to police headquarters that he could be found hiding in a hut on a remote hill-side. The military went to the place, knocked,

and upon entering found it empty save for an old woman who sat by the fire, peacefully smoking her clay pipe. The soldiers apologized for disturbing her, searched the place, and with renewed apologies lifted her gently from one chair to another, while they searched beneath the cushion of the chair she was occupying. "A favourite way we all used of hiding documents," put in Moira, "was to sit on them." At length they departed, again expressing their regret at having had to disturb her. The next day police headquarters received a note, signed by Michael Collins, thanking them for their courtesy to the old lady on the hill the afternoon before.

"But he's drinking now," said Moira, and in the dim light I could see her face contract.

As for Griffith—he was spoken of with contempt and dismissed with a shrug. His was not the nature to draw the romance from his adherents.

At length we parted, young Erskine to pick up his bicycle and make his way home, while Moira and I arranged to lunch together at the "Bonne Bouche" the next day.

It was one o'clock when we met, a busy hour, and the "Bonne Bouche" was filled with nicely-dressed women and well-groomed men. As we made our way to a table, a look of intense hostility passed over Moira's features.

"*These* are all Black and Tans," she whispered, as we sat down.

"But I thought they had cleared out of Ireland months ago," I replied, astonished.

"Oh, they did," she answered. Then, with added emphasis, "What have such as these people ever done for Ireland, though they call themselves Irish? They went to school in England; what do they care for a Republic?"

"But doesn't young Erskine Childers go to school in England?" I asked, puzzled.

She assented and was silent, yet I knew well enough the fire in her mind still smouldered, and that I should hear little of interest from her that day.

After lunch, we wandered into an exhibition of paintings that was on, until it was time for her to return to her "job" in an office of the Provisional Government. It struck me as strange that she should be working for the Free State, when she felt so contemptuous of its leaders. Yet were my suspicions merely the result of seeing the country alive and festering with intrigue?

I had come, a curious spectator, to this land of which in America we hear so much. A week had scarcely passed before I felt myself the fascinated onlooker at the weaving of a web whose meshes were infinite, but whose spider, it seemed, had been clever enough to conceal itself in its own intricacies. For the rest of that day, at least, Moira's dual position dominated my thoughts as I tried to ferret out her share in the conspiracy.

By a strange coincidence, Moira again crossed my path, several hours later, as I strolled out for a few moments of fresh air after an early dinner. This time she was with a friend. They stopped as I

approached. I was introduced. Her friend was doing secretarial work in the Four Courts for Rory O'Connor and his men. She seemed agitated, and after a desultory chat, rode off hurriedly on her bicycle.

"She's busy to-night," Moira said quietly. "Mick will have a job to get them out of the Four Courts," she added.

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears, but she pulled herself together and left me, explaining that her friend had entrusted her with a message for young Erskine, "who'll have to get a good start, for he's got a long ride before him to-night."

I remembered that young Erskine Childers had told me that he did despatch work for the Irregulars in the Four Courts. Cool courage there, to let a lad of fifteen go touring this country in the dead of night, and how instinct with bravery the boy himself must be.

Dusk was falling quickly. I returned to my solitary stroll, glad there was no passer-by to witness the satisfaction I could scarcely conceal that, in linking Moira with the inner working of this extraordinary situation, I had apparently not guessed too wide of the mark.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHILDERS

Young Erskine Childers came by his daring rightly. His father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Erskine Childers, remain the most courageous, if mysterious, figures prominent in the Southern Ireland of this period. For many years, from many sources, I had heard conflicting rumours of the extent of their activities for Sinn Fein. So it was with something more than mere interest that I betook myself, shortly after my arrival, to their simple home on the outskirts of Dublin.

How vividly I recall that first meeting. Mrs. Childers lay on a couch in the sitting-room, which occupied half of the first floor of the small house. Books lined the walls on either side of her, and lay heaped on the tables. It was a chilly day, and logs burned briskly in the fire-place beside her couch. The room, filled with spring-flowering things, glowed with and radiated sunlight; a perfect setting in fact for the woman who inhabited it. A long glass door, opening on to a garden at the back, stood slightly ajar, to admit the cheery sound of children's voices, while far beyond the little garden, off in the distance, rose gentle hill-sides covered with soft wooded patches.

Except for her posture, there was nothing in

Mrs. Childers' appearance to indicate the seriousness of the affliction from which she has suffered all her life. Certainly no trace of it was evident in her indomitable spirit. The blue silk shawl thrown over her, and the blue Chinese jacket she wore, set off the rich gold of her hair, and matched the vivid blue of her eyes. They were as nothing, however, to the charm of the woman herself, to which all who approached fell victim. Later I was to learn how seldom she gave a thought to herself, but spent all her hours, which might have been long and tedious to another similarly handicapped, in study and hard work. Yet from that first visit her position and that of her husband, surrounded as they were by so medley a group of people, seemed to me strikingly full of paradox.

Our meeting took place in the early afternoon. As we chatted, I felt myself drawn to her as I have seldom at sight been drawn to anyone. Immediately she spoke of the difficulties of the past month or two. She explained that the Treaty had been signed under duress. The delegates, in her opinion, had no right to attach their names without first returning to Dublin, and giving Dail Eireann the opportunity to go into the proposals.

" Who, after all, could reckon with Lloyd George and his ability to get people to do what he wants them to do ? " inquired Mrs. Childers.

Robert Barton, her husband's cousin, had held out to the last, then he signed only because it became clear that should he refuse, the entire responsibility for the execution of the threat would fall on his

shoulders. Immediately upon his return to Dublin, he repudiated his action in a statement widely published. His conscience free, he went over to the Republicans bag and baggage.

"Whatever took possession of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, making them act as they did," said Mrs. Childers, "I cannot understand. I cannot think they would take money——."

Her voice trailed off, and she paused before telling me how two different members of the delegation to London, signatories to the Treaty, had declared to her individually on separate occasions when they had visited her after their return, "sitting on the very chair you now are on," that the Treaty really created a Republic in all but name, and, in their minds, would merely be a stepping-stone towards the Republic, for which they intended to chuck the Treaty as soon as possible. But they would await their chance. In other words, England's adversity was to be Ireland's opportunity once more. . . . I thought of this old adage as Mrs. Childers talked; a principle without principle, it has brought Ireland singularly bad luck. . . . Mrs. Childers did not tell me the names of these two gentlemen, although of the identity of one she left me no doubt whatever. It was a point of view with which she expressed herself out of sympathy: as essentially dishonest, it would work ill for their cause.

"There is the Army to reckon with," she continued, and intimated that the Irregular branch would be difficult to handle. "Every man joining

the ranks of the Irish Republican Army, or elected to Dail Eireann, is bound by oath to maintain his allegiance to a Republic at all costs. The Irish Republican Army, which has grown so large and formidable an organization since 1916, is different," Mrs. Childers believed, " from any other army in the world ; because it is founded not on force but on mutual consent.

" Those men who have followed Rory O'Connor into the Four Courts, or who are carrying on operations under his direction in the country at large, are the only men who have kept their word.

" The Free Staters are the rebels ! " she concluded.

With the methods employed by the Irregulars, the seizing of food-stuffs and the raiding of banks for funds, Mrs. Childers found herself in full accord.

We left the present, and wandered back in thought over the seven hundred and fifty years of Irish history. As Mrs. Childers traced its salient features, one by one, ghosts of the patriots filed before me. " Holy Ireland " and her tortured, sorrowing past.

" This generation is the first generation of Irish to be properly fed," declared Mrs. Childers. " Soon after I came to Ireland first I met an old woman, a survivor of the Great Famine, who had outlived the horrors of those dismal months, as she expressed it, ' through God's good grace.' She described to me the agonies endured by thousands of her fellow

countrymen. All about her people were dying, family, friends. She herself dragged out her existence in a barn. . . . Imagine the imprint of such an experience on a childish mind."

During these centuries, according to Mrs. Childers, the traditional policy of Britain had been " pillage and rape," down to our own day.

" England still bullies Ireland, and what is more, controls every scrap of news sent out from here. Nothing that reaches the American newspapers is of the slightest value, for the simple reason that all such news travels over British cables."

She added that the most prominent American newspapers, naming one of great prominence, are controlled by British gold.

I listened attentively to this statement, wondering what answer the Editor would make to it.

At teatime Erskine Childers joined us.

. . . Again I am in that delightful room; the fire is burning less briskly, and my hostess, with the sweetest and most devoted of smiles, is greeting a man slightly built, of medium height. The photographs I have seen of Erskine Childers have little prepared me for the shock which runs over me as I turn towards him. Thin almost to emaciation, he looks ill, and unhappy to the point of death. I can only liken his face to a mask, to which the eyes alone give life. Restless they show him and haunted, as if he is driven by an inner soul-consuming fire. However courteous, he is aloof, and seems hardly aware of what is taking place

about him. One emotion only lightens the intensity of his eyes—his very real devotion to his wife.

Soon Moira joins us, and proves herself the staunch disciple she is. Her brown eyes glow with devotion as she chats softly with her prophets.

But it is the two boys who claim my attention. Young Erskine, fair-haired, fair-skinned, eager, listening with rapt attention to his mother and father, or turning to answer his younger brother's prattle with a gentleness and thoughtfulness unusual in one so young. His little brother is from a different mould, and already shows a striking resemblance to his father. Dark, with great, round, steady eyes, I find something defiant in the erect carriage of his slim body.

Soon I tear myself away. Moira accompanies me to the tram, and for the first time voices her love for this little family. She would do anything for them. But with her at this moment, I do not feel concerned. I am still under the spell of those remarkable personalities. A little excited, I trace with more comprehension the charts of the seas through which I have been drifting.

CHAPTER V

THE TROUBLE

My meeting with the Childers spurred me to look more deeply into the machinery of the Republican organization. Its headquarters were in Suffolk Street, a stone's-throw from Grafton Street, Dublin's main thoroughfare. There at one time or another all the notables could be found: Eamon de Valera, Harry Boland, Mrs. Muriel McSwiney, widow of Terence McSwiney, whose hunger-strike in Brixton Gaol had so agitated Irish sympathizers the world over; as well as many more whose names mean little to the outside world, but whose zeal knew no limit. In fact, these offices, occupying several floors, were a general meeting-place for Sinn Fein, and were pervaded with the atmosphere of good comradeship usual among those whose efforts are inspired by a "common ideal."

It would be difficult to name all the activities of Suffolk Street. While one department prepared Press notices, another initiated posters; still another collected, arranged and reprinted miscellaneous information. The Republican campaign, on the political side at any rate, was directed from here, under the guidance of "the Chief," Mr. de Valera, who had two large spacious rooms given over to his use. I was much impressed by his secretary,

a most remarkable young woman, poised, dignified, finely reticent, who had served him in this capacity for some years, accompanying him on his memorable visit to the United States. She went under an assumed name, the burden of de Valera's vast correspondence and secrets, which must then have been legion, heavy upon her. On his return to Ireland, he travelled by the so-called subterranean route used by every Irish agitator, but his secretary, armed with documents vital to the Cause, crossed on an ordinary liner, still using her fictitious name.

Suffolk Street was not the only place where Republican sympathizers were at work. Erskine Childers, for example, was engaged on a Republican publication elsewhere. However, these leaders were in constant touch with one another. As for an association between the Four Courts, headquarters of the Republican Military Forces, and Suffolk Street, Mr. de Valera emphatically denied, in print and out of print, that there was any. Yet his lieutenants did not hesitate to speak with pride of an entire co-operation. They even went one farther, and boasted of *liaison* officers, men as well as women.

Mrs. Muriel McSwiney headed the group of women who worked diligently and quite unselfishly many, sometimes all, of the twenty-four hours. She is a pretty little woman, with fair hair, and large, soft, blue eyes. In May of 1922 she had not long returned from Germany, whither she had gone to regain her strength after the strain of her husband's long illness and death.

Many were the strange tales she told me, to which I listened attentively, if somewhat incredulously. Among them was the emphatic declaration that Lloyd George's threat of war when the Treaty was signed was a mere hoax. It would then have been impossible for England to start another war. Nor would the United States have tolerated the use of *her* money—I suppose Mrs. McSwiney was referring to Britain's debt to the United States—" all that England has to live on," to kill her friends and relations in Ireland. " For," concluded Mrs. McSwiney, " England did not suffer in the war ; it cost her neither men nor treasure. Instead she grew rich from it, so much so that now she can afford to flood Germany with propaganda, as she has always flooded every country with propaganda at one time or another. But England is in deadly fear of the United States, and would do anything to gain her favour. Statements denying this are myths, put out for American consumption."

" The Treaty—— ? " I asked.

She replied, " It will simply be ignored, and the Republic by continuing to function as it is now functioning will gradually come into being.

" For we all know that Lloyd George is a devil of genius. But at the Conference in London he had his match in Robert Barton. There was one man who was too clever for him ! The Treaty was not drafted by the Irish. Who drafted it, I do not know." She nodded sagely, " England is the evil spirit among the nations."

" What about the elections ? " said I.

The answer came sharply :

" On no grounds will they be permitted to take place. People are so easily intimidated, it would be impossible to hold an election until the threat of war has been absolutely withdrawn. *We* should have no freedom under the Treaty. Wouldn't we still be British subjects in every sense of the word ? Were it not for England Ulster would come in, but how can she when England persists in keeping forces in the Six Counties, and spending Ireland's money to coerce Ulster ? "

We chatted about her visit to Germany. She told me how carefully she had read all the English and the German newspapers, shivered with genuine disgust over the English people with whom she had come in contact, and exclaimed, " They were so dirty ! English people are always so dirty, so rude, so heartless, so stupid ! They haven't changed ; they have the same characteristics we hated when we lived in England years ago."

She spoke of Terence and his last days, not with pride or sorrow, but as if in the nature of things. The blue eyes were very wide and solemn as she shook her head over the doctors in Brixton Prison, who had tried to tempt her husband with water.

" What could be greater wickedness," she asked me, " than to try to keep Terence alive when he wished to die ? "

I relate these statements exactly as they were made. As one followed another, oppression grew upon me, and for the first time since my arrival, I caught a glimmer of the difficulties which must

beset a Government in its administration of Ireland. Charming as I found Mrs. McSwiney, I distrusted her intelligence, while her obvious sincerity only increased my distrust. Her scale of values would seem to have turned turtle.

The Publicity Department was perhaps the most active centre of the Suffolk Street organization. The man in charge, tall, lean, with sandy hair, was a close friend and associate of Mr. de Valera. Often they were to be seen lunching together at the "Bonne Bouche." He had, in fact, accompanied Mr. de Valera several times on his missions, with such success, be it said, that he was entrusted with a tour of his own in 1921 through South Africa and South America. He assured me that General Smuts, then Premier of South Africa, had gone over to the Capitalists, and was banishing free thought and free speech. On several occasions meetings for the Irish Republican cause were cancelled because General Smuts himself refused the use of a hall. Nevertheless, the Republican cause was strong in South Africa, and growing. Before long they, too, would have their independence.

On the wall of the publicity room were posters of every kind and size. Some were caricatures of Lloyd George and "Johnnie Bull," while others were poems to "Bloody Balfour." Or again, they expressed passionate denunciation of Collins and Griffith, and ridicule of the Free State.

The Assistant Director of this Department, if

such she could be called, was one of the three O'Brennen sisters, well known in Dublin. She had once been secretary to Erskine Childers, in fact, had acted for him in that capacity while the negotiations were being carried on in London. She was a plain little woman, but with a fund of energy and intelligence, and the most gentle and endearing of manners. Heart and soul were in her work, for which no sacrifice would be too great, no action too extreme.

So much for Suffolk Street. A great deal went on there about which naturally I knew nothing, and although the place was usually as busy as a hive of bees, I never felt it to be the real centre of the Movement.

There were two other O'Brennen sisters, one of whom was Mrs. Kent, widow of Edmund Kent, executed after the Easter Rising in 1916, and the third, Miss Kathleen O'Brennen, not an employee of Suffolk Street, but a frequent visitor there.

It is of Kathleen O'Brennen that I have most to say. She was not merely a Revolutionist at heart, she was one in appearance. A quick, keen mind was concealed behind small, sharp, deep-set eyes, while an abounding but wholly tolerant and good-natured curiosity removed an impression that might otherwise have been displeasing and aggressive. When the head of the Publicity Department declared that "Smuts had gone over to the Capitalists," I thought of Miss O'Brennen, who only a day or two before had said with emphasis:

"Behind the movement of a Republic for Ireland is Bolshevism. Fundamentally it is a revolutionary movement, which the people here, with few exceptions, do not yet realize. There is Egypt and India seething with the same thing, all of it part of the great movement in Russia."

For some years Miss O'Brennen had been engaged in propaganda work in the United States, where during the war she was imprisoned no less than seven times for her pro-German activities. She had been the close associate and warm friend of Dr. Kuno Meyer, who, as most Americans know, from 1914 until his banishment was an active German propagandist in the United States.

Enlarging on her connexion with Dr. Meyer, Miss O'Brennen let it be understood that during the war Irish and German activities in the United States and elsewhere were identical. In Chicago, during those years, a group of houses in a certain street were used as a headquarters by Russian revolutionaries, by Germans, not necessarily revolutionaries, but to whom the revolutionaries were then indispensable, and by Irish Republicans. Indian and Egyptian agitators occupied the same group of buildings. These different peoples, working together toward their various ends, maintained one of the most important centres of revolutionary activity in the world.

I recall a conversation between Miss O'Brennen and Jack Yeats, the painter, a brother of W. B. Yeats, apropos of the recent announcement of Dr. Meyer's death. "I went to the station the

day he left to see him off," said Miss Kathleen softly, " to take him some flowers. It was such a dull day, and hardly another soul was there. I was glad I went. He was down and out, and sad, very sad. As we parted he couldn't contain himself, and the tears rolled down his cheeks." Her words brought the fleeting vision of a dreary station platform, the handful of apostles and Dr. Meyer, broken by the frustration of his dreams.

I saw much of Miss Kathleen one way or another, and regarded her as one of my most fortunate encounters, indebted as I am for many interesting and valuable sidelights on Sinn Fein. She was indeed one of the few Republicans who used her intellect rather than her emotions. She had a great deal to say about the feeling in the United States for Ireland, and insisted, more than once, that the Republicans made their greatest error in not sending to America men and women whose appeal would reach the well-to-do or cultured classes, professors and such.

" It is simple enough to take care of the man in the street," she mused, " but in the end it is the cultured people who count."

This struck me as a curious statement for a Revolutionist, yet, perhaps, it is among these that culture and intelligence are most valued.

Before her sojourn in the United States, she told me, she had been a spy for the Republicans at Dublin Castle, employed by her adversaries in a secretarial capacity. While she was there she collected information invaluable to her later on. In

fact, during the old days in Dublin—she related this with a chuckle—Miss Kathleen made a point of going about as much as possible from one house to another, keeping on intimate terms with the old families, " the Aristocracy," as she dubbed them, or " Upper Ten."

Of the ultimate success of this revolutionary movement this clever woman professed herself passionately confident.

" There will be no downing of that element, for the best minds are always on that side, and in this case they feel they have been betrayed."

There was something naïve about Miss O'Brennen, withal she was so able. Yet she was indeed strange to look upon! Her bobbed hair flew in every direction, exaggerating her untidy dress, and she was short and stumpy, with little fat hands. But how she delighted in the fact that she was now able to live in St. Stephen's Green, a part of Dublin in former days the habitation of the " Upper Ten ! " She thoroughly enjoyed life and her part in it, mainly, I think, because she combined a sense of proportion with a rare amount of common-sense and vision.

Much of this information was imparted to me one hot afternoon while we tramped along the Liffey, investigating the antique shops and stalls which range along either side of the river. Miss O'Brennen loves poking in these musty old places as much as I do, and my appreciation of her arose in leaps and bounds the more I witnessed her instinctive delight in beauty and age. Although

I rather fancy myself as a collector of the " genuine article," I failed that afternoon. The truth was, I was absorbed in another kind of treasure hunt, and I was to get my reward. One shop in which we tarried was rather larger than the rest, and dealt mainly in new furniture. Its proprietor, evidently on friendly terms with Miss Kathleen, was informed of my intention to go later on to the North. Miss O'Brennen always spoke of Ulster as the " Black North." From the conversation which followed, scraps of this and that, I realized that I was conversing with one who was deeply involved in the agitation then rife in the Six Counties.

We often discussed the situation in Dublin, did Miss Kathleen and I. In her judgment the Republican leaders were banking too much on shifting Collins, for at heart Collins was a politician who loved finessing here and fencing there. The one thing which would unite all elements would be the return of the British. To that end the Republicans were working. Suppose they were unsuccessful, as in Miss O'Brennen's opinion they would be, then civil war was inevitable. She was of those who would prefer civil war to a rising later on : should a Republic be lost now, it is lost for all time.

One day, as we sat over our tea, I remarked on the antagonism in certain quarters toward Erskine Childers.

" Yes," she replied, " he is hated. The feeling between him and Griffith has been strong since

Griffith was in prison and Childers took over Griffith's papers, refusing to return them when Griffith was let out. Childers' position is more precarious than that of any other man in Ireland, no matter what his party."

" But his wife, does she realize ? " I questioned.

A curious, wise expression passed over Miss O'Brennen's features.

" She is far too clever a woman not to measure the cost of whatever she undertakes," she answered quietly.

I inferred that Miss O'Brennen was by no means telling me all that she knew. Yet she had suggested a fate toward which those two people were heading, the mere contemplation of which made me shudder.

CHAPTER VI

THE FREE STATE

I was thoroughly intrigued by the Childers, who made no effort to conceal their entire absorption in the struggle for a Republic. Yet, why had they, during these years, persistently kept themselves in the background? Nor did they sink their individuality among the people with whom they were working; from whom they were separated so widely by cultural differences. However successfully albeit subtly they dominated the Republican group, their life was a life apart. Moreover, I was still by way of discovering why Moira should be working for the Free State while she so ardently supported the Republic. The situation held contradictions, for the solution of which I searched vaguely and in vain.

Amid so dramatic a mixture of poetry and prose, a story-seeker would have found much in Dublin with which to trifle during these days. Perhaps for him too, as the shadows gathered, concrete expression would have been smothered with difficulties.

A chance acquaintance, an Irish-American, encountered during the early days of my visit, remarked that the Irishman was not unlike the stew named after him, than which, well made, there is nothing better; badly made, there is nothing

worse. And he remarked, "At the moment the Irish political stew is on the verge of boiling over."

It would be vain to reason over the differences which set Ireland apart from other countries, and contrast its people so strikingly with other peoples. Those vivid hill-sides hold a spell of their own, a kind of maddening magic, theirs since misery began.

Tales of a certain "Mad Valley," recounted by an Irish friend, had contributed in no slight measure to the eagerness with which I had undertaken my quest. Since then I had listened to other stories which fit in no corner of this workaday world; bits of flesh, for example, taking to their heels and flying from table to floor as they were being prepared for a cat's meal. This, I am told, occurred to Miss Somerville, co-partner with Miss Ross in the *Tales of the R.I.C.* The "elements," a wise gentleman explained, were "asserting themselves."

Every Irish country-side is inhabited by a commonwealth of faery, responsible for all sorts of eerie phenomena. There are those whom the little people honour with visitations: Æ (George Russell) was one. Certain folk, too, possess queer powers, can at their pleasure invoke the saints to rule their lives. Thus the—

> "Mystical brotherhood
> Of hollow wood and the hilly wood
> And the changing moon work out their will."

Irishmen who have never left their country become more a prey to this "spirit of unreality" than those other Irishmen who have become

Anglicized or Americanized by education or residence. Nevertheless, no matter what their station in life, all the Irish possess certain inalienable characteristics. A drop of Irish blood will give brilliance to the calm, even temper of the Anglo-Saxon, throw him off the beaten track for the fuller glory of the Empire to which he belongs. Curiously enough, these very qualities which, in a diluted form, contribute to the romance of an individual career, have made the Irishman a prey throughout his history to movements not in keeping with his own peculiar destiny. "Foreign ways . . . are ways of spiritual poverty." Following the narrow road of custom, he clings to the legends of his forebears with alarming tenacity; in fact, their way of melancholy, "the tear which lurks behind the smile," has become a classic example of Irish insularity. Thus through the centuries has been fostered a unique and simple egoism. He who would influence this people must absorb their ways; use their emotions as the medium for his message.

Reflections of this kind came to me with astounding force while I listened to a concert given by a Society devoted to the development of Irish folk-lore. More defeats were mourned than victories hailed. Songs of sorrows centuries old re-echoed in the Irish heart as if they had taken place only the year before. "Since Malvina led the blind Oisin to his grave by the sea," bitterness and melancholy have formed the burden of Celtic song. It is to Ireland, always Ireland, that the poet sings,

" the dark Rosaleen " of the sonnet, but it is never to a happy Ireland. Yet how those melodies enchant.

" All day long in unrest,
To and fro do I move,
The very soul within my breast,
Is wasted for you, love!
The heart in my bosom faints
To think of you, my Queen.

" My life of life, my saint of saints,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
To hear your sweet and sad complaints,
My love, my life, my saint of saints,
My dark Rosaleen."

Where other nations look to the future, Ireland instinctively has kept her eyes fixed on the past.

Before ever going to Ireland, I had heard it said that this " desire of the moth for the star," and the consecration of a people to the sorrows of the past, marked a lack in the Irish of a sense of proportion, which is, in the last analysis, the kernel of the most saving of gifts a kindly Providence can bestow, a sense of humour. At the time I had doubted its accuracy, misled by the elfishness and impishness of Irish wit.

This strange psychology explained in a measure the difficulties which the Provisional Government was encountering. Still the Free State had one supreme advantage, which so far had belonged to no other Government of Ireland—but a few short

months before its leaders had been irreconcilably Republican, as a result of which they were now in a position to know the exact nature and scope of the organization opposing them. However, the spider, weaving his wonderful web, chose devious ways, and I was by no means convinced that even the leaders themselves were cognizant of the nature of the struggle of which they had been and still were so integral a part. The final outcome would depend to a certain extent on the development of the two most prominent figures in the Provisional Government, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the one who had so little personal charm, the other who was magnetism itself.

That Arthur Griffith had large intellectual capacity was unquestioned. Short in stature, abrupt in manner, I remember him often purple with the intensity of his emotions. He was an " intellectual " pure and simple, a man of theory rather than action. While he had the sympathies and confidence of the more moderate of the Free State adherents, for it was upon him the Old Nationalists and even Unionists pinned their faith, his grasp on the Sinn Fein element in the country at large had already loosened. In a measure this was due to the sudden disillusionment of the man himself, in whom there was lacking, I think, a spirit of compromise. For nearly twenty years he had worked for what had seemed a practical ideal, the while disdaining the use of force as foreign to his nature and design—sincerity in this as in everything else was one of his essential characteristics—until at the moment when

victory seemed within his grasp, he was swept aside by the extremists, his doctrine snatched from him, to be pushed by less reverent hands to its farthest limits.

To Arthur Griffith, Sinn Fein had acted as a boomerang. The child of his fancy, in whose rearing he had spent himself extravagantly, betrayed him as well as thousands of his fellow countrymen. There lay his tragedy. The more I saw of him, the more I felt that this sense of betrayal on the eve of fulfilment had crushed his very soul. Like all Celts he was a good hater, nor did he possess the blessed quality of forgetfulness.

The antagonism of the Republicans toward Griffith was by no means a new development. It was one of the under-currents in motion long before the signing of the Treaty, when there had been controversy as to the real meaning and ultimate aim of his doctrine of Sinn Fein. Certain persons believed Griffith had never wanted complete independence, but had sought merely the Dominion status which the Treaty gave, basing their opinion on his book, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, which dealt with the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. The inference, which in some quarters assumed the importance of fact, accused him of drawing an analogy between Ireland and Austria-Hungary to advocate the establishment of a dual monarchy in Ireland. However that may be, as time went on the intense antagonism between Arthur Griffith and the arch-Republican, Erskine Childers, assumed grievous proportions. From Griffith emanated the statement, hurled with much heat across the floor

of Dail Eireann, that Erskine Childers had spent his life in the service of the British Government, hinting in so many words that he was still so employed. Griffith doubtless had in mind Childers' book, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a most striking paradox of a curiously paradoxical career.

Temperamentally Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith presented a strange contrast. In Collins, great charm was coupled with a strong strain of common-sense, that quality unusual in his fellow-countrymen. Power and rare ability vied with a boyish and merry appearance, which last accounted for the happy way he had when in the Dail of laughing at his opponents across the room. In his earlier youth—he was still a young man—he had been a clerk in the sorting branch of the London General Post Office, but had returned, so I was told, to Ireland in March, 1916. Through the cleverness and foresight of somebody, exactly whom I do not know, he had early been drawn into his country's struggle for independence. For months, possibly years, before the Treaty was signed, he was the constant associate of the Childers, who expended not only thought but effort on his training and education. Many were the hours he had spent in Mrs. Childers' sitting-room, captive to her spell as were others before him and since, reading and studying the books she gave him, and gradually unfolding his strength and power beneath her magic influence. By degrees he became absorbed into the Republican organization. As he proved his value, he was entrusted with work of greater

importance, until finally he was put in charge of Sinn Fein's Department of Intelligence. By placing his agents in every part of the world, Collins organized this important branch with such extraordinary efficiency that Sinn Fein justly claimed that their espionage was excelled by none. The British, moved by their national unwillingness to anticipate danger, had taken few, if any, steps to counteract this menace. In the old days Rory O'Connor had worked in conjunction with Collins; it was even said that many of the adventures attributed to Collins had really centred about Rory O'Connor, who had preferred to remain, for the outside world at any rate, a dark horse.

While Miss O'Brennen had not erred when she referred to Collins as a politician, in my own judgment he was something more. He held the very spirit of genius. What connexion, if any, he had with the inner circle directing the Republican campaign is steeped in mystery. Had the idea occurred to him of a secret hand working with deadly purpose? . . . The impression formed itself that the close contact with Westminster during the Treaty negotiations had quickened Collins' powers, and swerved him from the goal toward which he had originally been heading. The qualities of his leadership were of a kind to carry him eventually to a high pinnacle of power, a pinnacle toward which his concern for Ireland and his personal ambition seemed jointly to be driving him. His weaknesses might form obstacles in his path, although these were largely the defects of genius.

As for his position in the Free State, it would seem certain that he had grasped its danger. Nevertheless, during these few weeks preceding the civil war, he was sitting back with an amazing passivity, trying desperately to pursue a middle course. The report that he intended to try " to put something over " the British by drafting a Republican Constitution was, I understand, perfectly correct. In other words, he would have played the British if he could have done so safely ; he might even have tricked them, yet I do believe that for him the die was already cast, and that had his efforts to outwit the British not failed, he would not even then have deserted the Free State for the Republic. His passionate attachment for Ireland had widened his horizon, and had enabled him to look beyond his own country, and visualize the international aspect of Irish problems. Gradually he became conscious that what might seem matters of life and death to Ireland would only make that little country ridiculous in the eyes of the outside world. He knew also, that should civil war come, it would spell the ruin of his country for one generation at least ; nor had he disregarded the fact that at the close of the Great War, Ireland, financially, was better off than almost any other European country. Collins' courage, his waywardness, his daring, his love of adventure, together with that incalculable quality about which no two persons could quite agree, which many hoped would lead him to throw over the Free State for the Republic, held the imagination as well as the heart of extremist

and Free Stater alike, and made Collins the centre of the Irish world during the last weeks of May, 1922.

Had Griffith been alone to handle this situation, I doubt whether he would have been able to contain himself. At least he would have taken steps to turn Rory O'Connor and his men out of the Four Courts. As it was, the influence of Collins prevailed. This divergence of opinion caused friction between the two men, differences which were stimulated as much as possible by their opponents. At first I discounted the rumours of conflict, but watching the two personalities week after week at the meetings of Dail Eireann, I became convinced that their understanding was not as perfect as it might have been. One thing, however, Collins did share with Griffith—Griffith's bitter antagonism to Erskine Childers. Yet who, after all, had been more responsible for putting Collins in the position which he occupied than Mr. and Mrs. Childers? I reflected much on this singular circumstance, and the more I reflected the more thoughts of my spider would intrude themselves. It was clear to me that Collins had been enmeshed gradually and imperceptibly by the threads of this wonderful web. That he was an integral part of the spider's calculations there could be little doubt, and I felt, as I watched the drama unfold, that should the Republicans not recapture him they would lose the one personality under whose guidance they might still press forward to victory. Of such an eventuality my spider was doubtless fully aware.

CHAPTER VII

DAIL EIREANN

MEANTIME, at the regular meetings of Dail Eireann the conflict of personality became increasingly acute. What a medley gathering it was, but how vivid, how fraught with meaning! Parliamentary procedure, although imitated, was never closely followed. Nor could it be so long as Gaelic, neither spoken nor understood by most of the Deputies, remained the official language. This informality, dear to the Irish heart, produced an atmosphere peculiarly stimulating, put each person present, Deputy or otherwise, figuratively on tiptoe, eager, expectant, for what the next moment would bring forth. As for reticence or self-control, the complete absence gave reality to the proceedings; and a sense that the lid was off, which increased rather than diminished from one meeting to another, confirmed the impression that from such a gathering a deliberate and measured judgment could not be anticipated.

The first time I went to the Dail I arrived early, and stood with young Erskine Childers in the hall below, watching the arrival of the members. We leaned comfortably against a wall facing the entrance, while he poured out bits of information about the people passing to and fro, in the hurried, earnest way he had. Between these remarks he sandwiched sketches of his own future. After school

he was going to Cambridge—his father had been to Cambridge. Then, always provided that Ireland had a Republic, his grandmother had promised to send him around the world, but if Ireland had not a Republic he was coming back to Ireland to help his father. He was determined never to rest so long as Ireland remained in bondage. So thoroughly had the lad absorbed Republicanism that already at fifteen he was on fire with it. The school he went to, he confided, was probably the only school in England that would have accepted him, thinking and feeling as he did. He was even permitted to keep a signed photograph of Mr. de Valera on his dressing-table. On he chattered, impetuous, excited.

His father passed us on his way to the meeting, walking with bent head, deliberately, eyes fixed on the ground, paying not the slightest heed to anything going on about him. It seemed incredible they were father and son these two, they differed in so many ways. There was in young Erskine Childers flaming youth of a rare sort, the kind we associate with natures such as Rupert Brooke. About his father hung disillusionment, complete, ashen, as of all time.

Meanwhile outside the building a knot of the curious had gathered, as they always did before and after these meetings of Dail Eireann, whose cheers on the arrival of the more important Deputies floated in to us where we stood. A sudden vociferous outburst warned us of the tardy arrival of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, whose walk and bearing, I noticed, had not yet lost a slight self-consciousness. Slowly we followed upstairs in their wake.

I went to many of these meetings of the Dail, and the audience was always, as it was on my first visit, composed of priests and newspaper correspondents, a few visitors, and a large number of the staff from Republican Headquarters. The seating space, except for the Deputies, was by no means adequate, and a large portion of the audience stood throughout the proceedings.

As the days passed and the animosity between the groups increased, the outcome of the conflict became forecast, although few there were who did not at least hope that at the last moment a solution would be found. Arthur Griffith, terse, sarcastic, arraigned his opponents with a bitterness which sprang from the pain of his tortured spirit. How easy it was to see that he lacked the easy flow of rhetoric, a quality so treasured by the Irish people, so indispensable in their leaders! "Mick" Collins, with that boyish shake of his forelock, and flashing with energy and fire, had not yet thrown off the defects of a too quick accession to power. The more Griffith lost control of himself, the more mischievous Collins became.

Directly across the room on the Opposition Benches, de Valera patently avoided the eyes of his opponents, or jumped up to fling out hot denial of some accusation from the other side. Beside him Charles Burgess, better known as Cathal Brugha, was continually rising to address the Dail, speaking always in Gaelic first, at the end translating what he had said into English. Harry Boland occupied a place on the left of Cathal Brugha—

Harry Boland, a jocular, crafty soul not unlike the politicians of Tammany Hall, the resemblance reflecting his profound admiration for an institution against which he would allow no slur of criticism. For, as he explained to me one day, " Between you and me, Tammany has given more aid to the Republican cause than any other single body." Almost hidden behind these three, and in striking contrast, sat Erskine Childers, as ever silent, remote, absorbed.

The other Deputies, to whatever political party they belonged, ranged where they pleased in different parts of the room. Toward the centre Liam Mellows, still in his twenties, often addressed the Dail with the fire and energy of the born orator. There was something dynamic in this short, stocky figure, in his face with its clean-cut features, a shock of light air carelessly brushed back from the forehead. It was a face capable of gentleness, as I had remarked one day when I happened to catch sight of him bending over a small child, his manner then contrasting strangely with his aggressive, fierce bearing in Dail Eireann. Sean Moylan, another prominent and extreme Republican, a great favourite of the Childers', was usually silent at these meetings, although together with Liam Mellows he was in close touch with the Four Courts and Rory O'Connor.

No meeting of Dail Eireann would be fitly characterized without at least a mention of Mary McSwiney, sister of the well-known Terence, who loved to harangue the Dail, and consistently linked the name of the Deity with her aspirations for a free Ireland.

Robert Barton, the cousin of the Childers, one of the signatories of the Treaty, had little to say. His lack of chin, for me at any rate, signified the man. I placed him among the followers rather than the leaders of mankind.

Cosgrave was then but a shadowy figure. There was Gavin Duffy, a member of the Provisional Government, who spoke with a neat and crisp precision, and without a trace of brogue. Darrell Figgis, also a prominent Free Stater, occupied a seat in the audience, and was chiefly remarkable for a flowing red beard exquisitely groomed. Some months later he was shorn of this glory in the dead hours of night, by raiders who claimed that they were acting "under orr-ders." Certainly he was more smartly and meticulously attired than his associates.

Day after day we sat in that crowded room listening to the debates, one of which strikes loud chords in my memory. It was the first day that civil war was openly admitted to be a possibility. Griffith, at the height of his passion, inadvertently declared that the incumbents of the Opposition benches were "traitors." Cathal Brugha replied in this manner—first in Gaelic, then in English:

"Some people have declared, not once but many times, that they would like to die for Ireland."

As he spoke he looked directly across the room at Arthur Griffith and paused a moment before continuing.

"If civil war should come, *and it will come unless the other side makes terms, I for one will see to it that those people have a chance to die for Ireland!*"

The little man shook with determination. He meant what he said, fiercely.

On the same occasion a delegation, having discharged the duty for which it had been sent, namely, to submit proposals of moderation, was permitted to remain and take part in the debate. I recall the amused comment of Erskine Childers just after this incident.

Dail Eireann had adjourned early. Running across Robert Barton, Erskine Childers and young Erskine in the lobby of my hotel, I invited them to tea. They were delighted with the impropriety of the procedure in these sessions of Dail Eireann, and remarked gleefully, "Such a gathering could not be found outside Ireland."

As we all laughed, I was struck afresh with the incongruousness of Childers' connexion with such an assemblage, nor did the reflection leave me as we chatted. This man, consumed as he clearly was by an inward agony, with his noble intellect, his gentle demeanour, was not the stuff of which Dail Eireann was made.

Such was the make-up of what were, in May, 1922, the two most prominent parties in Southern Ireland. There were other parties, other factions, although this last is a word which may define them too strongly. I should rather say, there were groups of people who belonged neither to the Republican nor to the Free State ranks, but who none the less represented a large and still important section of Southern Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII

LOYALISTS

The "Loyalists," of whom serious mention is seldom made, have always been an important factor in the affairs of Southern Ireland. Their loyalty to Britain has caused them not merely pain and sorrow, but the loss of their worldly possessions; in some cases, their means of livelihood and life itself. There have been many Catholics among them, although it is usual to say that only Protestants are loyal. And as they belong frequently to the educated and well-to-do classes, they have been increasingly a target for the extremists. Some of those with sufficient means have gradually left the country, and are spoken of as the "absentee landlords." Some who could have gone chose to stay with others who had no alternative but to remain. Those whom I met showed the strain under which they had been living. I ran across one family from Cork, whose house had been raided on no less than seventy nights by armed youths who wore no uniform. Another family with whom I talked owned a small grocery establishment in a certain village in one of the Southern Counties. They had five small children. The eldest of these, a boy of seven, awakened in the middle of a close July night by several strange men moving about his room, said

to one of them, "What are ye doin'?" For answer the leader walked up to the child and shot him deliberately between the eyes.

Negatives of photographs were shown me of outrages committed, evidence of the violent anger which association between Irish people and British officers had evoked during the period prior to the Treaty. The publication of these negatives no Irish firm would risk; in fact, had their mere existence been known to the perpetrators, death would have been the certain fate of their possessor. In one, the Irish wife of a British officer, about to become a mother, was shown shot to death in the stomach. In another, an Irish girl, who had accompanied a British officer to a tennis party, lay by the roadside, her white dress drenched with blood; in his car, a few feet away, could be seen the body of her escort, riddled through and through with bullets. This last photograph was taken by a despatch rider who arrived as the scene was ending; who by a miracle had escaped unharmed. . . . These were examples of the kind of outrage taking place, and I mention them to show the trying circumstances under which Loyalists, Catholic as well as Protestant, lived in Southern Ireland and were still living at the time of which I am writing. In the minds of the Republicans, "Loyalist" was synonymous with "British Government."

As for religion and its share in this controversy, doctrinal differences were not the key-note to the unrest. There was, of course, a measure of bigotry, acute expression of which was reserved for the

struggle between the North and South. Of this I was later to become better informed.

It is true that the rank and file of Sinn Fein were Catholics born and bred, whose priests, in the early days of strife with the British, had not always seen fit to condemn acts of violence against the State. Curiously enough there had been a simultaneous, if gradual, lessening of clerical control, until now, after the birth of the Free State, the Church found itself powerless to intervene and quell the violence and anarchy rampant over the entire country. Some of the best-known and wealthiest Catholic families were most bitter opponents of the Republican cause. I think of one devout Catholic particularly, who heatedly declared, "I cannot understand how any member of my Church can uphold murder, political or otherwise, without divorcing himself from his faith."

I met Jesuit priests who were profound Republicans, and priests, Jesuit and otherwise, who were profound Free Staters. The priests who thronged the meetings of Dail Eireann were, from their garb, members of every known Brotherhood. While the elder ones watched the proceedings with concern and gravity, the younger ones made no attempt to conceal their delighted acquiescence whenever extreme sentiments were expressed. There was a reason for this of course: the inevitable working of cause and effect.

In times past the priests were sent to the Continent for a portion of their education. But the more recent recruits, drawn largely from the unedu-

cated classes, instead of going abroad received the whole of their training from the College of Maynooth, on the borders of Kildare and Meath. Maynooth was hotly Republican. Perhaps the quality of these younger men may have affected the prestige of the Church. In the old days, the clergy had possessed virtual control over the lives of their flock, and could, if they chose—on occasion actually did—arrange marriages between the members of their parish. To their influence has been attributed, in a measure at any rate, the renowned chastity of Irish womanhood. Such advantages were counteracted, however, by certain definite disadvantages in matters of education. Catholics themselves attribute the appalling ignorance of the humbly born Irish to the over-bearing authority of the Catholic Church, under whose sway the superstitious yearnings of the people were more encouraged than restrained.

Traditionally anti-British since the day when Great Britain ceased to be a Catholic country, the Catholic Church was not reluctant to throw the weight of its influence against the Government up to the time of the Truce. Thereafter its attitude became uneasy. May of 1922 finds the Hierarchy watching and waiting, making a gallant effort to balance itself evenly on the top of the fence. As some earnest minds believed, its policy of recent years may have been designed to produce just such an ambiguous position. Confirmation on that score is denied us. All we know is that while in certain districts an individual priest condemned

acts of violence, there was no edict from the Church as a whole. In short, the tail now wagged the dog —the Church, one time the proud leader, had become a patient follower.

Confirmation of this Jekyll and Hyde position was given me when I was taken by one of my acquaintances to a meeting of the Board of Directors of a certain organization in Dublin. There sat on this Board several rabid Republicans side by side with a well-known and middle-aged Jesuit priest. There was prolonged discussion over several controversial points, during which the Republicans flew into a temper, and left the meeting. Meanwhile the elderly Jesuit leaned back in his chair, silent and unperturbed, a twinkle lighting his quiet eye. When order was restored, he bent slightly forward, placed the tips of his fingers carefully together, and remarked, " It is all right, gentlemen, let them have their way ; give them enough rope and they will hang themselves."

The clergy of the Protestant Churches were faced with more pressing difficulties. The one with whom I came in closest contact was Irish born and bred. His view was anything but detached, full as it was of concern for the future. He was an author of some distinction, rich in a knowledge of Irish history, a fund of information he put most generously at my disposal.

" I tell you," he declared one evening, when his feelings were at their height, " we are at the mercy of eight hundred armed men. You see for yourself

law and order simply do not exist. Public opinion as a force is dead, and if an election should take place to-morrow, it would be worthless, because people will not risk their lives by going to the polls.

"Anything is likely to happen; no one has a moment's security, wherever their sympathies may lie."

He sat back in his chair, eyeing me sternly from beneath a pair of bushy eyebrows. They signified the power and courage as evident in his manner as in his words. Yet I noticed that even he had taken the precaution to close his door before uttering this vehement statement, while a glance at the windows showed that they, too, despite the sultriness of the night, were fast bolted.

"Have you been in Dublin long?" I asked, to relieve the pressure.

"All my life," he answered. "This trouble began first in 1906, the year of the Cattle Embargo, also the year when arms were permitted free access. Up to that time no place in the world was more delightful than Dublin. Of course at one time or another there has been agitation—that is Ireland—but nothing of any moment."

He paused; considered before continuing.

"Whoever takes the trouble to study Irish history will find the simple fact that the Romans never settled in Ireland is responsible for the total lack in the Irish temperament of a fundamental respect for law and order.

"Outrages occurring in different periods of her

history have their parallels in the history of other countries. This she forgets.

" I knew Griffith intimately in the old days when he first embarked on his ' Sinn Fein.' We were about the same age, and lodged near one another. I used to point out to him then, what I still believe, that while it is one thing for Ireland to study her own history and develop her own literature, speak Gaelic if she likes, and so forth, commercially her very existence is dependent on a close connexion with Great Britain. The Canadian Cattle Embargo is an example : it is likely to cripple the cattle trade here."

His wife joined us. She was full of restrained agitation, her nerves on edge, jangling. The women of this *genre* suffered anguish in these days. Yet these two people were fair minded. They did not exonerate the old Unionists from a share in the catastrophe, who by differentiating themselves from the rank and file of the people had widened the class barrier. They pointed to the lack in Ireland, except in the North, of a strong middle class, which in other countries bridges the gap between the rich and poor, and they confirmed my own observation that religion, while it was the basis of the feud between the North and South, was not the underlying cause of anarchy in the South and West.

On this occasion we talked far into the night. The room in which we sat was large, and lined throughout with books, which produced a sense of peace and security I had accustomed myself to do without.

Later as I went homeward and heard myself followed along the quiet streets intervening between their house and my hotel, an unpleasant sense of the lonely hour came over me. It was the first time I had been out so late. Distant sounds of firing did not reassure me. But glancing across my shoulder to see the indiscriminate-looking figure in trench coat and slouch hat, whose business was apparently to find out mine, I scarcely could restrain a laugh.

I never saw these kind friends again. I heard some months later, that a few weeks after our last meeting, when the country was plunged into the heat of civil war, they had been forced to leave Dublin, their home of years standing.

I recall with delight a day spent under the wing of another Loyalist, whose beautiful place on the outskirts of Dublin remained intact. An Irishman who had served his country long and faithfully, latterly in one of its most exalted offices, his success had come as the reward of genuine ability coupled with hard work and self-denial, years of struggle he had enjoyed and liked to recall. When I met him he was old in years but young in spirit, rich, too, in a varied experience. Ireland he knew thoroughly from end to end, and was full to the brim of that merry wit and laughing good nature for which his countrymen are everywhere renowned. Yet he lacked nothing of pride, and should the need arise stiffened into an expression of harsh severity and solid disdain. He abhorred the

principle which lay behind Sinn Fein, nor could he reconcile himself to meet the leaders of the Provisional Government on his own footing.

This gallant gentleman, whom for convenience I shall call Mr. X, was my first introduction to the dignified charm of the Irish gentry, not the least of whose admirable qualities is a sympathetic understanding for the tenants on their land. Promptly at noon he called for me in his car, having given me in his note of invitation the warning injunction that I must be ready when he arrived. "In these days," I was reminded, "one cannot park one's car even for a few minutes, without running the danger of having it commandeered by corner-boys."

As we motored to his home, he described at length the difficulties under which his friends were struggling. One lady, when informed by armed strangers that refugees from the North were to be quartered on her, of her own accord ordered that her barn be cleared and fitted with beds. But when the refugees arrived she was summarily disposed of by the guardian who accompanied them. "We'll be afther takin' the house and leave you to have the bar-rn," he had said, with a sly wink at his mate.

We drove for perhaps twenty minutes before we turned into a winding driveway, at the head of which, immersed in greenery and shaded by tall trees, stood a square stone house.

There is none of the trim beauty of the English country estate in these Irish mansions. They do

not present a finished picture, but have an ordered untidiness, like rough gems set in unpolished settings. This one nestled comfortably in rich lawns not too finely clipped, while the garden at the back spread out enchantingly to the limit of its grey lichen-spotted walls. Both were ancient; in fact, it was said that Cromwell had used the place as his headquarters. Nor was the interior less charming than the exterior; large, comfortable rooms, filled with the accumulated treasures of many years, among which were some of Æ's best canvases, hung on yellow walls in the drawing-room.

A small grandchild joined us for luncheon, served in a stately and delightful room, its white panelled walls hung with a few fine etchings and portraits. I confess to a feeling of uneasiness when I encountered the passive face and stern eye of the butler who had been in the service of my host for many years, but about whose demeanour there was something to cause me vague misgivings. Afterward accompanied by two grandchildren, we wandered through the garden, a rare enticing spot, while I listened to tales of the forerunners of this present day.

My friend was deeply distressed over the seizure of the Four Courts, and considered the delay it must necessarily cause in the execution of the law little short of disastrous. Within those dingy walls were records which never could be duplicated, and priceless archives preserved jealously for centuries. If anything should happen to these the chaos would be complete, and many hundreds of people would

have no way of establishing claims, in some instances matters of life and death. In unusual circumstances Rory O'Connor had given permission for these documents to be consulted, thus enabling the law to be administered to a certain extent.

"It comes to this: the affairs of Ireland are now in the hands of Arthur Griffith, a clever journalist, and Collins, a former clerk in a post-office!

"Surely," my host continued in his soft, polished brogue, "the British have taken leave of their senses to allow such a state of things. It is time the world realized"—his tone was profoundly grave—"once and for all that the Irish are a people incapable of governing."

For his own part he would have no truck with the rebels. Not long before, a certain prominent member of the British Government had suggested that he should go and pay his respects to Collins and Griffith. "I would sooner cut off my right hand," he had retorted.

Despite his years of public service for Ireland, he now found himself ignored by the Government. Thus there were people who regarded the Irish question as entirely insoluble!

He delighted in drawing brief sketches of the habits and character of famous men and women he had known, living and dead, or lingering among tales which showed the charm and goodness of the simple folk.

Parnell, not an attractive personality perhaps, possessed rare ability. His mother, the daughter

of an American naval officer, instilled from her cradle with the ancient grudge toward Great Britain, had come out in Parnell more strongly than his father. The O'Shea episode was, in my friend's mind, the real cause of Parnell's breakdown. Something was challenged in the man himself, but then, "I once sat opposite Mrs. O'Shea at a luncheon at the Vice-Regal Lodge. What beauty, what charm! I can well understand how the fascination of such a temperament swept Parnell off his feet."

He ruminated on a bygone election of his youth in County Derry, illustrative of those qualities of mind and heart in the Irish character.

"There is no limit to the generosity and kindness of the real people if they are left to their own impulses. One woman, the mother of a large family, came to offer me her husband's vote. She fulfilled the pledge, although because of it her husband lost his job, and they were thrown on to the street, penniless. When I learned of this misfortune, I tried my best to find her, but in the meantime she had disappeared. To this day I feel sorrow and uneasiness."

His love for the Irish people was reflected again when Mr. X recounted the determination with which the villagers near him had concealed his whereabouts from a raiding party. He had reason to be proud of this. From other sources I found that such loyalty was but evidence of the affection felt for him in the tiny village near-by. In return he would, I am sure, have done anything for them,

" grand honest folk " ; indeed, although his work for Ireland was over, and the agitation increasing, he could not bring himself to leave.

We returned to personalities. Balfour, " a peer among men," and the " best Secretary Ireland ever had," lacked a warmth, an urge from within, which alone might have added to his greatness. He was too much the philosopher. Straight and upright beyond all men, he was successful in his administration of Ireland because he had been quick to sense the incalculable qualities of the Irish character. On one occasion, when certain statements made in his official capacity were challenged in the House of Commons, he had without hesitation retorted, " I have given the House the facts. Whether they are strange is not the question. They are the facts. The House must accept them."

As for the Cecils, they were a wonderful race ; the latest scions tinged with eccentricity. While Lord Salisbury, the present holder of the title, was more balanced than his brothers, Lord Hugh should have lived centuries ago, and Lord Robert, now Viscount Cecil, should have had a world specially created for him.

A few well-known persons of Irish blood were mentioned. Lord Roberts for one, " that wonderful, wee man," retiring and profoundly simple, " who at parties was usually to be found tucked off in a corner making himself delightful to the plainest and least intriguing woman in the room."

And Kitchener, from whom several letters were

produced, was " a most tremendous personality, who will be remembered as half Irish."

At teatime my host pointed to a photograph of the House of Commons taken some twenty-five or thirty years before, several of whose members were the fathers of prominent Government officials of 1922. He pointed to Joseph Chamberlain, with the remark, " while he had more brilliant qualities than his son Austen, he was by no means as honest and straightforward." Briefly, in passing, he mentioned the streak of genius running through the Churchill family. . . . Carson occurred to him, " whatever one may think of his politics, a straighter man has rarely lived, nor was a human being ever less actuated by self-glory or self-gain." To Lloyd George he attributed genius ; unstable, yes, possibly, but " he will go down to posterity as a really great man." This praise, it must be remembered, came from one who could see no advantage whatever in the Treaty.

Before I took my leave my host issued his final edict on the subject of Ireland.

" The British have fallen down in their management of Ireland, because they are unwilling to recognize that the Irish temperament understands only a firm hand. The mentality of these people is such that they must at all costs respect those who command them. No one, to whatever political party he may belong, can deny that the country is in a bad way. The danger is that the Republicans will gradually saturate the whole structure of the Free State, as the Fascisti have saturated the

Government of Italy. While this process is going on, God only knows what is to become of the rest of us."

I took my leave as the sun was sinking over the distant hill-sides. For the space of a few hours I had been living in another world ; I must admit, a gentler and more normal one. My friend represented what was finest in the Ireland of another day, and under the spell of his happy, tender reminiscences the turmoil taking place only a few short miles away had, for the moment, faded from my mind.

CHAPTER IX

FOUR COURTS—DE VALERA

Among Nationalists and Unionists, where bewilderment was general, no spot-light was turned on forthcoming events.

Several weeks had passed since my arrival in Dublin. It had been a period of enlightenment, yet of increasing perplexity, during which I had met persons prominent in every political party, and witnessed evidence of vast intrigue. Civil war, no longer mentioned in a hushed whisper, was recognized as the logical end toward which the policy of Free Stater and Republican alike would ultimately lead, unless, perchance, some miracle should intervene. With characteristic lack of reasoning, Free Stater and Republican alike prayed for the miracle.

Shortly after the delightful day spent with my elderly friend, I witnessed the extent to which the Four Courts had been converted into a Barracks. Miss Kathleen O'Brennen, who was on cordial terms with Rory O'Connor, remarked one day: "Would you like to go over the Four Courts, perhaps?"

My reply, "Nothing would give me greater pleasure," spurred her to procure the necessary pass, and with her customary spontaneity she volunteered to escort me herself. By this time the whole

building had been strongly reinforced, and all entrances were heavily guarded by armed young men.

How strange it seemed to walk through the inner courtyard, to be confronted at every turn by youths, who were men before ever they had been boys, wearing civilian clothes, heavy leather belts bulging with cartridges and revolvers strapped tightly about their waists. These arms they handled with marvellous ease and skill, and their eyes shone the brighter because of the strain and weariness which lined their faces.

Walking up the stone stairs inside the building, on every side we noticed evidence of disorder: furniture lay stacked about in piles, while books and boxes of records had been thrown carelessly into corners. Through what seemed an endless passage I followed my escort, our footsteps on the stone flags re-echoing through the tall spaces, until we turned at last into a room alive with the chatter of typewriters. From here we entered a large square chamber, in a corner of which sat two young men quietly writing, while in the centre a desk stood unoccupied.

We appropriated two chairs standing empty opposite the desk and waited. I glanced out of the windows thrown open to the soft May afternoon, and wondered idly what that old Ireland long buried would have said to such a phantasy. They were crippled by their love of quarrelling, limping on in the same old way through the centuries.

My thoughts trailed off as Rory O'Connor entered,

unromantically armed with a towel and a piece of soap. He was without a coat, and his shirt was turned in loosely at the neck. During these days they had little time for " trimmings " in the Four Courts. A young man in the early thirties, Rory O'Connor had the stark, transparent aspect of one already touched by consumption. Yet his whole demeanour was marked by a quietness, a seriousness, even a sternness, which placed him immediately among the leaders of men.

When I remarked that I had always understood his name was Rory " O'Gory " O'Connor, as Sir Henry Wilson had facetiously nicknamed him at a public dinner not long before, his answering laugh was just tinged with satire. We chatted for a few moments about America, then either forgetful or careless of my presence he plunged into an absorbed conversation with Miss O'Brennen. His present plans, his future plans, his lack of funds—" more than anything at this moment we need money "—were poured forth in rapid succession. Within a fortnight the Republicans must have two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to tide their men over this difficult period.

" Poor devils, they cannot live indefinitely without an income," Rory remarked.

During the last weeks he, Rory, had been establishing fresh " underground " routes of communication with the United States, with Europe and the Colonies. He intimated that the " other side," meaning the Free State, was anxious to come to terms, but he and those with him would negotiate

with the Free State only on the basis of a complete repudiation of the Treaty. O'Connor did not think that Collins would hold out unless he managed to outwit the British with a Republican Constitution. In Europe, Germany could not be relied upon as formerly, but there were other centres in France (Paris), in India, Egypt, and Russia, with whom " we must keep in constant touch.

" Meantime we are drilling hard in the Four Courts. We have enough to occupy us, filling sandbags and training new recruits."

William Randolph Hearst, reported to be midway across the Atlantic, had given his support to the Free State, a stand he was reluctant to change. Miss O'Brennen communicated this piece of information, and Rory particularly asked that Mr. Hearst, who was expected to visit Dublin, be brought in to see him immediately upon his arrival. I was asked to carry back certain letters to the United States, " because the Free State opens everything which goes through the post." The request, not pressed, was not fulfilled.

This conversation offered the distinct proof that the game was getting more and more serious. It was apparent that the Republicans regarded civil war as a foregone conclusion, requiring every ounce of their precaution and skill. No doubt they would bide their time until Collins had settled the matter of the Constitution.

The warm summer afternoon, even to the bee hovering about the window-ledge; the firm line of Rory's eyebrows as he carefully balanced his

statements; his twisted smile unreflected in his eyes; stand out undimmed in my memory. There was something primeval in his deadly earnestness, his dogged determination. One did not get the warmth which comes from balanced, chiselled minds. Rather, one felt a force as ancient, as unreasoning as history itself, something elemental which towered above life, and which would be unchecked by death. Quiet as he was, his whole personality was instinct with power, a heritage descended to him perhaps from that other Rory O'Connor, King of Connaught in 1156, the first King of the Gael to be inaugurated at Dublin. However that may be, through Rory of the Four Courts, the ancient Gael was bidding his countrymen take fire and sword in their hands once more, and go forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

During the few days following, the intention of the insurgents to set up Republics in each of the Southern Counties took active shape. It was a purpose for which they had long been entrenching themselves in strongholds throughout the South, during the process of which skirmishes with the Free State troops had in certain districts already taken place.

As luck had it, less than an hour after my interview with Rory O'Connor I was listening to the story of one of the most spectacular of these local broils, the storming of Kilkenny Castle, seat of the Earls of Ormonde. It was but another admirable example of the amazing share of the women in Republican

activities. The Castle had been stormed and seized, and for several days held by a small garrison of Republicans. Two days before their forced surrender they were in desperate straits for ammunition, so desperate that they must give up the show unless a fresh supply was procured by midnight. An urgent message to this effect was sent to a certain girl in the town, who promised she would herself deposit a supply sufficient for emergency needs, beneath a gate in an outlying part of the Castle grounds at twelve midnight. In the dusk of the summer evening, she set off with her load through a muddy lane in the opposite direction to the Castle. This route led her for several miles into the open country, where eventually the road intersected with another, which, without going near the town, would take her directly to the Castle. Hour after hour she trudged along with her bundle, as her friend said, "never feeling the weight, thinking all the time of the boys in the Castle," and managed to reach the trysting-place as the hands of her watch touched twelve. Nor did fatigue bother her as she found her way back as she had come, the while gloating that she had accomplished her sacred task alone.

Two days after my visit to the Four Courts I had an interview with Mr. de Valera at Suffolk Street.

Again the afternoon was warm and sunny, in its tranquillity an infinite contrast to the emotional crisis through which Dublin was passing. As I entered the room Mr. de Valera greeted me kindly,

pointing to a chair standing vacant by his desk. I was impressed immediately by the concentrated intensity of his eyes, which appeared to look through me at something behind my back miles away. On this afternoon he seemed exhausted, and after the preliminary greeting sat silent, staring through the open window at his side as if he lacked the energy to carry on a conversation, however desultory. To break this silence I made some trite remark. It had the desired effect, and he pulled himself together. Immediately the human note vanished, he became de Valera the fanatic, who, had Fate been less impish, should properly have lived centuries ago.

Roughly he sketched his history. Born in the United States of an Irish mother and a Spanish father, at the age of two years he was brought to Ireland by his mother, with whom he lived on a farm in the country until he was old enough to make his way in the world. Familiar with Gaelic from childhood, a love for the language led him to make its study his profession, which ultimately won for him the Chair of Celtic languages at the National University. During those intermediary years of his boyhood and young manhood, he had not visited the United States, but during the early days of the renewed struggle for independence the emotional forces of Sinn Fein gathered under his leadership. Now, looking back, his quick rise to fame seems incredible.

He was somewhat off his guard that afternoon, and astonished me not a little by his frank discussion of the Republican cause.

"It has weakened," he remarked, "in Ireland as well as out, since December 5th, 1921, and the Republicans now have the gigantic task of re-educating public opinion." Particularly had sympathy in the United States waned, he added, and he expressed pessimism for the future. As for Ireland, she was no longer behind a Republic.

"You see," he said, "the people are ignorant, and it is easy to work on their emotions. The threat of war which still dominates their minds makes an election at this juncture altogether out of the question. The country would only go solidly against a Republic. As for the oath which the Republicans took when they became members of Dail Eireann,"—he looked at me very earnestly—"or when they entered the ranks of the Irish Republican Army, *I have from the first opposed any such; like the oaths in the United States Senate, they are little more than formulas.*"[1]

His tone lightened when he spoke of the women and their devotion to the Republican cause. "They are," he said, "showing a more dependable and self-sacrificing devotion than the men."

I asked him if he thought Ulster would come in under a Republican form of Government. His answer was more honest than any I yet had heard from the lips of a Republican.

"Emphatically she will not," he said; "she will not come in on any basis whatever.

"We shall have to use force to win over the North, but under a Republic we should allow Ulster

[1] Author's italics.

freedom for self-government, with the understanding that she would divorce herself completely from Great Britain. She would have to cease trading with Britain and sever what relations she may now have."

In other words, Ulster could be free in so far as her freedom coincided with the wishes of a Government of an Irish Republic. "*L'histoire se répète*," —even among idealists.

Had my talk with Mr. de Valera been published on the day it occurred, his statements would have brought his house of cards clattering about his ears. In so many words he had admitted that a Republic could be set up only by force, by hurling the North and South of Ireland into a welter of strife from which the most persistent optimist would admit she might never recover. On his own initiative he had acknowledged that the Irish people did not want a Republic, that they had for the time being at any rate lost interest in a Republic. While in one sense he was entirely inconsistent, in another he was irrevocably consistent. His eye was focused upon a Republic, and nothing on earth, not even the will of the Irish people, could blind him to that vision. Of his sincerity I had no more doubt than I had of Griffith's. In all things his inflexibility had the weakness of obstinacy. As soon as I glimpsed the intense fanatical emotion with which he was actuated, I became convinced that his leadership was due more to his personality than to a gift of astuteness. I felt then, as I feel

now, that he was the tool of a brain infinitely cleverer than his own, and that a special quality which reflected itself in his smile wrung from his adherents an amazing single-mindedness and devotion.

I watched the effect of his personality on a gathering he was addressing one night at St. James' Fountain, one of the poorest districts in Dublin. Young Erskine Childers and I had accompanied each other to the meeting. The crowd was dense, and not over-inclined to be friendly. Mr. de Valera, on an improvised platform, a rough country wagon, sat looking gloomily over the sea of faces. Quite suddenly he smiled; the smile reflected itself on the people gathered immediately about him, and gradually spread, first to one face and then to another, until the entire crowd rocked with good humour. For the first time I noticed the gentle expression about his eyes. When his turn came to speak he used the same arguments pro and con the Treaty which I had heard over and over again, and declared many times that the Irish people would never allow themselves to live for ever under the tutelage of a British king. He even mentioned the oath to the Republic, bitterly attacking Collins and Griffith for having given the lie to this oath when they signed the Treaty in London.

The people, far from being carried away, were in turned bored, amused or impatient, except that when he smiled this warmth crept over their faces: de Valera the fanatic had no appeal, but de Valera the man had a great deal.

CHAPTER X

HOWTH—ITS MEANING

The tension did not lessen. Each day drew the country nearer to the conclusion of civil war, before which even the most stout-hearted and ardent Republican quailed. Yet all parties gave full rein to their emotions, so intrigue prospered and nothing definite emerged in the way of a settlement.

During the heat of the controversy, I had luncheon with a Mr. Beals, an American newspaper correspondent. Arrested by the international aspect of Irish affairs, he had already ranged himself on the side of the Free State. His belief, "that the Republicans expect help from the United States but forget international politics are based on purely selfish considerations, and that the United States will not aid Ireland until Ireland has something the United States wants for herself," voiced a cynical but wholly logical interpretation of the exigencies of practical politics.

"For the Republicans," went on Mr. Beals, "have failed to appreciate Lloyd George's dual position. The Premier of Great Britain first must think imperially, responsible as he is not to Britain alone, but to the Colonies; second, he must interpret internationally. The Republicans are from the outset destined to failure. Any attempt to set up

a Republic would be vain against the combined strength of the British Navy and an economic blockade, and what is infinitely more important, such a step would spell the ruin of Ireland for at least a generation to come."

We were sitting in a public restaurant, where furtive glances were cast in our direction as fragments of our conversation floated to other ears. Mr. de Valera, accompanied by his chief *aide*, came in and seated himself at a table near-by. As Mr. Beals, nothing daunted, continued to express his views, more than once I caught the Republican Chief's glance turned sternly in our direction.

After luncheon we went on to a meeting of Dail Eireann. The ease with which the Deputies concentrated their attention on trivialities was more than ever dismaying. Petty squabbles were an instinct with them and a creed, while they evaded with consummate skill the problem nearest the heart of the entire country. In the light of retrospect, I see that this may possibly have been a method of playing for time, of shelving the final decision for as long as possible.

My conversation with Mr. Beals and the meeting of the Dail uppermost in my thoughts, I repaired the next morning to the Childers', from whom I was learning much of the conduct of Irish affairs. Of these I was still woefully ignorant, a circumstance more of an advantage than a disadvantage, because my mind, not hedged in by the underbrush of preconceived ideas, was left to scan wider horizons.

The morning was dull, as I remember, and although it was barely ten by my watch, I ran into Robert Barton coming away from the house, who informed me that I should find both "Molly" and "Erskine" at home.

Mr. Childers, even more absorbed than was customary, chatted for a few moments—rare for him.

"As far back as 1911," he told me, "I urged the Dominion status for Ireland, the very position Griffith is upholding to-day. Since then the miseries of this little people have sent me marching forward, and left him far behind."

British reprisals were spoken of with horror—"villages were burned, leaving women and children homeless while the men were away fighting." He dwelt at some length on the suffering of the women with husbands "on the run"; curfew made it impossible to fetch a doctor during child-birth, or the illness of a child. Here Mrs. Childers interrupted with a comment on the chastity of Irish women. "I know of no case," she said, "where a British soldier in Ireland betrayed a woman." This revealing fact she attributed to the virtue of the women rather than to that of the soldiers.

Childers, however, did not believe that a Government was entitled to combat outrages inflicted on those loyal to them by an army which did not call itself an army, whose members wore no uniform to differentiate them from other non-combatants.

When her husband left us, Mrs. Childers for the first time voiced her belief that civil war was

inevitable, unless Great Britain could be persuaded to retract her threat " of an immediate and terrible war." " Collins," she added, " is the king-pin of the situation. Ultimately he must choose between the British and the Republicans ; and the Republicans are the youth of the country determined to see the thing through no matter the cost. *Glorious Youth* to whom the Republic is a question of honour ! The only alternative to civil war is a period of quiescence, during which matters must be so handled that a Republic will slip in through the keyhole."

As if in answer to the unspoken thought flashing through my mind, Mrs. Childers added, " We, of course, are powerless to intervene now." She spoke as if much moved, yet with unusual vehemence, like one trying to convince herself against her better judgment.

In Tipperary and other counties, plans were progressing fast, and Republics soon would be set up.

" England must choose. They are wicked beyond expression in their dealings with Ireland. Did the Coalition Government keep its promises after the war ? Why should Britain oppose Irish independence so bitterly ; how can Ireland ever harm England ? True, of course, what happens here will be repeated elsewhere."

Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Childers let question follow question, fast, one upon the other. It was the British Government, not the British people, whom she attacked so bitterly, disregarding the fact that the Government for good or ill was but the reflection of the people's will.

The following day when I saw Mrs. Childers again, she told me how she and her husband came to be identified with an Irish movement.

Erskine Childers was Irish on his mother's side, and while his associations with British political life had always been close—an uncle had been Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's time—his interest in Irish affairs had been quickened by visits to his relatives the Bartons, who had a lovely place in County Wicklow. After their marriage, his wife had shared these Irish jaunts, and there grew up in her a corresponding love and admiration for the Irish people.

When Erskine Childers returned to England after the South African War, he was much agitated by unhappy reflections in a British newspaper toward a certain Boer General with whom he had had pleasant dealings. I remembered, although Mrs. Childers did not mention it, that the famous *Riddle of the Sands* was published in 1903, showing that Erskine Childers was not then inimical to his country. The story possibly reflected one of the various stages through which he must have passed before, as Mrs. Childers quaintly remarked, "We resolved to become reformers, deciding at the same time that we must somewhere draw the line." In 1911, Childers published his lengthy volume pleading the Dominion status for Ireland. During these years their home was in London, for a time at least in Chelsea, while Childers served as Clerk of the House of Commons. Meanwhile they were drawn gradually, if imperceptibly, into the struggle for independence.

When Carson ran the guns into Larne for Ulster in 1914, a few weeks prior to the war, feeling between the North and South, smouldering as usual, reached a crisis. A young woman, Mary Spring-Rice [1] by name, a member of a well-known Irish family and the daughter of a devoted Unionist, walked into the Childers' London sitting-room one day, and throwing down her gloves with characteristic gesture, declared, "Isn't it about time that the South ran in some guns for its own use!"

This remark was the breeze which fanned the embers. After discussion the venture was undertaken. Erskine Childers, accompanied by Darrell Figgis, departed to Liége for guns. Failing to acquire them there, they proceeded to Germany and were successful. Meanwhile a yacht of the sail-boat type, belonging to a friend of the Childers, Alfred Oliphant, waited in the North Sea. It was manned by Mrs. Childers, Mary Spring-Rice, a young Englishman whose name will never be disclosed and who since has died, and a trusted fisherman. In due course, the guns were placed abroad by Childers and Darrell Figgis. The latter, however, did not accompany the little party on their perilous journey.

There was an uncanny note in Mrs. Childers' voice as she recounted her story, quiet, detached as she was. It had been prearranged for the arms to reach Howth Harbour, a few miles out of Dublin, at two o'clock on a certain Sunday afternoon. For days the little party struggled through the North Sea, prey to all the storms which torment that part

[1] This statement is verified by Darrell Figgis.

of the world at this season. Disregarding her own disability, and sharing her companions' fear lest they should be late at the trysting-place, Mrs. Childers held the wheel for hours at a time. They ran short of food except for a small quantity of salt bacon, and on the final lap came to the end of their water supply. Still they struggled on, managing with persistence to circle the bend into Howth Bay on the appointed day, at exactly the appointed hour. And as they came within sight of the landing-place, a long line of figures swung round a bend in the road leading towards the pier. Here Mrs. Childers paused, then said quietly, very quietly, "What a sight it was, what a wonderful sight! Those young men, fifteen hundred strong, were the first draft of the Irish Republican Army!"

. . . . .

Within two months of this episode, Erskine Childers had enlisted in the British Army, in whose Intelligence Service he served until 1916. In 1916, with his family he settled permanently in Ireland, and together he and his wife poured the full measure of their energy into the struggle for an Irish Republic.

During the period from 1914 till 1916, when Childers was serving with the British, the organization of the Irish Republican Army went on continuously. Recruits came easily, partly because of the romantic, adventurous life, and partly because service in the ranks of this secret army meant £3 or £3 10*s*. a week. Drilling was mainly under-

taken at night, that daytime employment should not be interfered with. According to young Erskine Childers, his father had been more intimately connected with the perfection of this organization than any other single person, much more, too, than those on the outside supposed; while Mrs. Childers herself made no secret of the large sums which had passed from time to time through their hands alone for Republican activities. She put the sum at "zwei hundert tausand."

A quaint custom exists in Dublin. The usual noon meal is a boiled egg, with bread and butter, coffee or tea. It is a fancy which could well be imitated elsewhere, as I often reflected while I cracked my egg in Mrs. Childers' sitting-room. It was a great effort for her to move, even with sticks to assist her, so when no one else was present, we ate our luncheon on trays in the sitting-room. I remember that at this time she was delighting in *Moby Dick*. As we refreshed ourselves, we would leave politics for a little and discuss these lighter things. Yet her mind was never far away from the magnet which absorbed its whole attention, and once the trays had been removed, Mrs. Childers would drift back to Irish affairs. On this particular occasion she spoke of the horrors of the "Terror," as she called it, or the period from the Easter Rebellion in 1916 to the signing of the Treaty in December 1921. She told me quietly that her husband's activities, had they been known, would have been sufficient to warrant his hanging.

As it was, each of them had had more than one marvellous escape. One evening they had with them a gentleman whose importance in Republican circles was such that the British had offered a large reward for his capture. He had brought certain documents with him, "the kind of papers," said Mrs. Childers, "one reads and then burns." The evening was warm, so warm that no fire burned on the hearth. Dinner over, they were unfolding the papers when a loud knock on the front door announced the arrival of the Military. A moment of hesitation, before Mrs. Childers with her usual prescience directed that the sheets be quickly tucked among the newspapers beneath the kindling on the hearth. As the officers entered Mrs. Childers, still with perfect poise and composure, introduced their friend under another name, adding, "'I am dismayed you should have chosen this night to visit me, for I would have liked my guest to carry away with him a good impression of British rule in Ireland.' The officers were polite," she added, "as they usually were when they raided our house, and after a more or less perfunctory search departed."

Her own disabilities no doubt attributed not a little to the ease with which she was able to camouflage papers and note-books, whenever a raiding-party came on them suddenly. Once again when this happened, she described how her husband had slipped a note-book full of the most vital information down the front of her gown, where she kept it safely hidden while the British officer gently helped her off her couch. Then she remarked

that she did not think that the British would dare to lay a hand on her husband, he had too many influential friends in England and the United States. For herself, she could rely on safety. As she had once told a British General, "You may kill my husband, but you cannot kill me or my children, and our work for the Irish Republic will continue."

Seldom have I witnessed in anyone a more indomitable courage. I agreed with Miss O'Brennen, that her intelligence was too acute for her not to realize the dangers for those dearest to her, in this work upon which she was so intensively engaged. Yet, during these latter weeks of May, she was restive. There is a sentence in Kipling's History of the Irish Guards, "They went into action while the bells of the quiet country-side rang for Church," which seems not irrelevant. Mrs. Childers listened to the bells of the quiet country-side ringing, and shared the ordinary activities which are the milestones of most lives; sending the younger boy to school in the morning, welcoming him home at midday, her whole being in the meanwhile concentrated upon every fresh development of those events with which her life was so closely woven. Tied to her couch as she was, with her husband she worked all day, every day, as well as long hours into the night. "We seldom go to bed before three in the morning," she once said. Her endurance was marvellous. Not her endurance alone, but that wonderful, even temper which was seldom ruffled, to which petulance or irritation, in

the face, too, of what must often have been acute physical suffering, was foreign. I remember Moira describing her stoicism during an attack of the 'flu. Day after day she had lain, tranquilly obedient to those directing the course of her illness. Through it all she had retained the same quiet patience, her mind even then concentrated on work for the Republic. Moira's description of Erskine Childers himself through those grievous weeks, racked between concern for his wife and absorption in their political concerns, stamped itself on my memory.

As for the plans formed and discussed during these midnight vigils, an impression grew upon me that they were of the most vital concern to the Republicans; a supposition of which I had confirmation some days later.

Once only, one evening when I was bidden to meet Æ, did I see Mrs. Childers relax. Æ always visited her on Monday evenings; for although their political opinions differed profoundly, they were the greatest of friends. She rejoiced in his mind with its delicate sensibilities, and followed his thoughts with delight as they dodged hither and thither in a world of golden abstractions. It was "freedom" Æ wanted too, but freedom in the universal sense. An intense dislike for the formalities of life and an abhorrence for the veneer of social intercourse, formed a common ground between them, recalling boring hours which they had both endured at London dinner-parties, one of which had been sufficiently overwhelming to drive Æ back to Ireland. He could find no

category in which to place people with such a propensity for consuming food.

On the Wednesday preceding the famous Saturday in May, when a Pact between the Republicans and the Free Staters finally emerged from the negotiations in progress, a memorable meeting took place in Dail Eireann. The debate was unusually long, even for Ireland abnormally illogical, and considering the vital import of the agenda, incredibly irresponsible. Yet the silver-tongued oratory had the effect of champagne on angry Deputies and wearied audience. When Liam Mellows declared that the Republicans would have no truck with the politicians, his words cut the air like an electric current.

Michael Collins had listened to the discussion with more than his customary restlessness. Nevertheless, he allowed people to talk themselves out before rising to address the Dail; speech in the Chamber was unusual with him. As a rule he was content to watch the proceedings, perhaps interjecting a word here and there, his quick eye bright with laughter. Now as he rose, a thrill, hostile in some quarters, eager in others, passed over the audience.

He directed the attention of the Deputies to the deplorable state of the country, presenting them with facts to which, he complained, Dail Eireann was paying not the slightest heed. He denounced the irresponsibility of those Deputies who showed themselves careless of the events now common in

every district in Ireland. Should Ireland not settle down to tackle the problems daily growing in number, the Government would be forced into stronger action. Nor were the finances of the country on any too solid a foundation. A handful of men could, nay had, upset the functions of government. The same handful of his fellow-countrymen who had failed to grasp the essentials of government must be taught them, "*law and order must and shall prevail.*" Despite the threats of the Republicans the election would go through.

"It is all very well to oppose the Treaty," said "Mick," flinging out his arms with a wild gesture; "those who carried out the negotiations in London had certain obstacles to overcome. Had there been other delegates no better result would have been achieved; but why had not those gone themselves who thought they could have done so much better?"

It was the first time any Government official had attacked the Opposition with such fire, or made so brave a defence for the Free State. As he finished, boos and sneers drowned the applause of his adherents.

Yet he had been careful to leave the way open to negotiation, a loophole interpreted by the Republicans as a sign of weakness, and a desire to court their favour.

Apart from Collins' challenge, at this same meeting there emerged a new development of the utmost significance. During these weeks the violence and outrage in the North between Catholics

and Protestants had been daily increasing. On whom lay the responsibility? When an effort was made by several Republicans at this meeting of Dail Eireann, among whom the most prominent was Cathal Brugha, to sink the differences dividing the opposing parties, and unite in a joint struggle against the North, a portion of the audience at least was swept off its feet.

"What do we want with an Ireland that is not united?" stormed Cathal Brugha. "What right has a foreign nation to divide our country by separate forms of Government?"

But behind this new note, inspiring it no doubt, was the old idea, "*Hasten the return of the British.*"

On the morning which followed this meeting, I found Mrs. Childers unusually agitated. She was not on her customary couch in the sitting-room, but lay on another lounge in her husband's study, a small room upstairs at the back of the house. The morning was sunny, bright with the freshness which follows rain, and the hills in the distance, toward which the windows face, had never looked more enchantingly green.

The meeting of Dail Eireann the afternoon before was uppermost in both our minds. In point of fact, Mrs. Childers was at that moment engaged on a long letter to a friend in England who had influence in high circles. She was anxious for this friend to exert pressure on the British Government, convince them of the errors in their policy. She remarked, "If only we can mark time here until the change

in the British Government will secure for us all we have been fighting for." Mrs. Childers was referring to the possibility of a Labour Ministry.

As for Ireland herself, she confessed that the Republicans no longer voiced the sentiments of the entire country. "Is it not natural for people to dread the discomforts and turmoil of civil war? No one likes disturbance or discomfort; prosperity is always a more welcome guest than adversity. If only for that reason alone, an impression *must* be made on the British Government, which is sensitive only to that section of the Irish people who have remained loyal. These Loyalists already have suffered greatly, although many of them belong to powerful and influential families. Should civil war break out, they will be the first to feel its pangs. My husband has always believed that the danger of further suffering to the Loyalists contributed not a little to the granting of a Free State.

"Perhaps it may still be possible to persuade the Provisional Government to ignore the Treaty altogether, and to carry on the functions of a Republican form of Government as if no other existed. That can be done only by persuading Michael Collins to inform the British that he is quite unable to put through the Treaty, for the reason that the I.R.A. will never permit such an election to take place. A few men," continued Mrs. Childers, unconsciously echoing Collins' warning of the afternoon before, "can upset the functions of Government as easily as one mosquito can disturb a night's rest."

She paused with a little sigh, murmuring, "I wish I could tell you everything." Inwardly I wished so too, but I made no comment, and in a few moments she picked up the trend of her thoughts.

"Last night in this room, three plans were discussed for dealing with Michael Collins. I am going to tell you what they were, because the final decision reflects so wonderfully the character of the men who are directing the Republican councils.

"The first was to force Mick to act as we think he should act, and then launch him as the popular hero of his time. It matters not to whom goes the glory.

"The second was to discredit him if he does not act as we believe he should act.

"The third alternative was to shoot him.

"But these young men do not want to shoot Collins unless it becomes necessary. When one realizes what they have at stake, to forsake the last two for the first is a wonderful indication of their nobility of mind and heart."

Mrs. Childers confirmed the report that Collins was preparing a Republican Constitution, which by a fluke might go through. While she did not repudiate the idea of this camouflaged Constitution, she did not like it. Fundamentally it was not straight, and she hated the mere suggestion of crookedness on the part of the Irish.

"It is common enough for the British to lie—they do little else." She mentioned a recent debate in the House of Commons, during the course of

which Winston Churchill had told the House that Michael Collins was to be trusted.

"This statement is untrue: where Ireland is concerned Collins is not to be trusted, as Churchill must know only too well. Collins is Irish to the core; he lives and breathes Ireland, and will not let Ireland down."

In other words, this lady was still tragically confident that in the end "Mick" would not take "the wrong turning."

The meeting of Dail Eireann which occurred on the following Friday was of little account. During this week a committee, composed of representatives from each side, had been appointed and was sitting daily, far into the night, in an effort to find a common basis for discussion. So far the negotiations had proceeded unsuccessfully, but to leave the negotiators a clear issue, Dail Eireann adjourned on Friday until the next day.

On Saturday, toward noon, I betook myself to the Republican Headquarters to see what, if any, news had been received of the deliberations of the committee. The suppressed excitement in those rooms indicated the gravity of the situation, and for once I found the head of the Publicity Department and his assistant, Miss O'Brennen, idle. We sat chatting for over an hour. At two-thirty, a telephone message from the Mansion House informed us that a Pact had been agreed upon, which would be submitted immediately to Dail Eireann for ratification. The relief on the faces of those faithful

workers was intense. Miss O'Brennen, her pale face wreathed in smiles, murmured, " Thank God, I shall not have to cut them any longer." She meant, of course, the Free Staters, her former brothers-in-arms.

On my way back to the hotel, I stopped at a small corner shop to buy some fruit. The old woman who served me was in a fearful state of alarm. Having observed the direction from which I had come, she asked if I could give her any news. I told her what I knew. Exultant, she threw her apron over her head, muttering, " Mercy be to the good God." When I undid the parcel, I found that in her excitement she had miscounted and given me twice the number of oranges I had paid for.

But the Pact reached with Mr. de Valera providing, " that a panel of joint candidates arranged between the Treaty and anti-Treaty parties should be put forward, and a joint appeal " made " to the country calling for their unopposed return," while giving a merciful, if temporary, respite, only stirred the dregs further.

For myself, I was tortured by a desire to go to Mrs. Childers and beg her, for the sake of the country she professed to love so dearly, to do all in her power to prevent so terrible and, what seemed to me, so inevitable a catastrophe. Some instinct held me back. Perhaps it was a sense of futility, a conviction that nothing anyone could say would weigh with her, heedless as she was of the possible effect of such a calamity on those who were her nearest and dearest.

CHAPTER XI

A WHITE RABBIT

Dublin was relieved. Had I been unwise enough to express my apprehensions, I doubt few would have shared them, for the Pact had ended weeks of harrowing strain. Still, there were some quarters in which its terms were regarded dubiously.

On the evening of the same Saturday, I went to the meeting of a small club composed chiefly of business and professional men and their wives. Except for a young chap, one of the staff engaged to draft the Constitution, no one present had directly affected the events described in the last chapters. During the evening, the terms of the Pact, naturally uppermost in all our minds, were dissected and criticized, and it was agreed, particularly by one or two Professors from Dublin University, prominent members of the Club, that this spectacular development, although it brought temporary tranquillity to the public mind, might be the forerunner of a right-about-face by the Provisional Government, or camouflage Collins' return to the Republican party. Much sympathy was expressed for Arthur Griffith, in whom lay the sole hope of moderation, who was not blamed for the failure of the Government to take steps against the activities of Rory O'Connor. This negligence

was attributed to Collins, who was thought to nurse a desire to make terms with the Republicans.

The young fellow engaged on the Constitution sketched its outline briefly. He looked tired, a trifle worried perhaps, and with some skill avoided answering a question directed at him more than once, "Is the Constitution in accordance with the stipulations of the Treaty?"

Among business men, the resumption of normal trade was naturally the main concern. "Cut out commerce with the North and with Great Britain and the country will go bankrupt," they said. "Ireland's geographical position makes her dependent on the land to which she lies nearest."

Incidentally these words recalled a conversation I had had the preceding week with a well-known Dublin lawyer, for years a strong Nationalist, who had voiced similar sentiments when he said, "No Government of Ireland can pursue the fetish of isolation without seeing the economic framework of the country crumble in its hands."

Although the men who held these measured, if not idealistic, opinions had eagerly offered their services to the Provisional Government, because they had formerly swelled the ranks of the Nationalist and Unionist parties their offers were ignored and their counsels unheard in the affairs of Southern Ireland. The bitterness revealed in their tone and expression was an inevitable reaction. Yet, in this matter, it could well be explained that Collins and Griffith were between the devil and the deep sea, and could ill afford to make friends with

those who were, in the minds of their enemies, partisans of Britain. Add to this that Collins was feeling his way, trying first to govern with a velvet glove before resorting to an iron hand.

Through the eyes of the members of this small club, still another side of a complicated situation was revealed to me, a side with which, willingly or unwillingly, a Government of Ireland would ultimately have to reckon. For Ireland, like any other country, is dependent for its security on its well-to-do middle classes.

Under the spell of sandwiches and good talk, the warmth, latent in every gathering of Southern Irish, quickened. We emerged from the low-ceilinged room long after midnight, to find College Green bathed in moonlight, St. Stephen's Green deep in mystery. Half of the city lay dead with dreams, not all of them happy, for Dublin does not breed happiness, and the other half hushed by their own wrath, slow burning within them for centuries.

On Tuesday of the following week, word was sent up to me in my room at the hotel that a caller waited below. A few moments later, I found myself greeting a short, stout gentleman, with a neatly clipped but rather long white beard, no less a person than Timothy Healy himself! I had heard a good deal about Mr. Healy one way or another, for so many years the arresting figure he was in Irish politics. I had been told he knew more of the inner history of Ireland during the past few generations than any man living, a knowledge he

concealed behind a mask of reticence. There were occasions when he was said to have spoken ; only, however, after he had known his confidant intimately for years. I came across just one individual with whom he had talked thus, who admitted that the information imparted was of a most revealing nature.

We chatted for some moments about my journey to Ireland, and about the United States, concerning whose politics he was singularly well informed ; as he was in fact about all American affairs. Boston, cold as it is, had appealed to him most, charmed him by its quaintness and gentle hospitality, of which he had many delightful recollections. Incidentally he had travelled to America under Parnell's wing, as his secretary. The mere mention of that famous name evoked the bitterness he still retained, despite the intervening years, toward the great leader with whom, ultimately, he had quarrelled. While his antagonism to Britain was noticeable, it was an antagonism of the heart rather than of the mind. For he, too, shared the conviction that Ireland was dependent upon a close affiliation politically and economically with Britain.

An impression gained on me as we talked, that he was on intimate terms with the leaders of the Provisional Government, a relationship not generally recognized in Dublin. He styled the Pact a victory for Collins, a view I had not heard expressed elsewhere.

After our chat, he took me to the old Georgian section of Dublin to see a few of the ancient landmarks. We stopped at the Cathedral College,

while he pointed with delight to some wonderful mural decorations and old fire-places. Saturated he was with love and reverence for things of beauty. As the car drew up at the entrance of this College, he pointed to a building a few hundred yards away across the street, which, he said, was one of the main rendezvous for Sinn Fein in the days before the Treaty. Its roof was easily accessible, and many times Collins and Griffith, with other leaders, had used it for escape. Unfortunately as we reached the Cathedral the doors were being closed for the night. How keenly Tim Healy resented the transfer of this noble pile from Catholic to Protestant hands! Thorough patriot as he was, he preserved a detachment for everything but his Church, to which his devotion was such that one suspected he still harboured passionate resentment at the overthrow of Catholicism in England. With the Republicans he had little sympathy. He was by nature conservative, and I think he scented Bolshevism too strongly in the Republican doctrine to be attracted by it.

From the Cathedral we drove past Guinness' Brewery, where he pointed with pride to the benefactions which Lord Iveagh had heaped upon his employees, and along the Liffey past the Four Courts. As we slowed up, he surveyed the fortifications silently, a little troubled perhaps, but with the same bored tolerance with which a good-natured, elderly parent often regards the escapades of an errant son. He explained rather wearily, "There has always been trouble in Ireland, I suppose there

always will be," and he listed the periods of disturbance through which he himself had lived.

Although the two men were incomparable, I could not help wondering if Timothy Healy did not bear the same relation to the Free State that Erskine Childers bore to the Republicans. Behind the charming and delightful manner, and cultured, sphinx-like mien of this gifted gentleman, I felt that a rare knowledge was concealed, for the subtle use of which he was most happily endowed.

I was to see him again later, but, unfortunately, the circumstances of the next few days prevented our meeting.

Tim Healy's confident attitude, however, did not in the least allay the misgivings with which I continued to contemplate the future.

The horse races were now over, and few were staying at the hotel who had not a special reason for being there. Since all fresh arrivals aroused a measure of curiosity, the sudden descent among us of Mr. Art O'Brien caused a mild sensation. Prior to the signing of the Treaty, he had been the representative of Sinn Fein in London, where since that memorable event he had served the Free State in a similar capacity. I noticed that he was the constant associate of another stranger, likewise a new arrival, a tall, distinguished-looking man, who, so I was told, had long been Sinn Fein's envoy in Berlin. According to Miss Kathleen O'Brennen, Art O'Brien had agents in the Irish Office in London as well as in the Foreign Office. Mrs. McSwiney,

however, enlightened me further. She noted the care with which O'Brien camouflaged his sympathies, then, as always, rabidly Republican. At this moment, he was actually in charge of vast sums of money, biding his time to start a campaign in England as soon as the "psychological" moment should arrive. In London, therefore, his position was dual: he must at all costs keep on the right side of the British Government, the while strengthening his grasp on the revolutionary elements in the country at large.

I was further disquieted by an experience I had in Phœnix Park.

Finding myself with a free afternoon, and feeling the need of rest and quiet, I betook myself by tram to Phœnix Park, "the Faynix," that historic and beautiful spot on the outskirts of Dublin, the scene of many a tragedy in the annals of Irish affairs. It was a bright afternoon, and I sat sunning myself on one of the benches placed along the flower-bordered paths, a feature of that charming place, watching a bee draw honey from some mahogany-coloured wallflowers. There seem to be unlimited varieties of this fragrant flower in Irish gardens.

I was completely lost in my own speculations, until suddenly the seat jigged uncomfortably. Looking up I saw that I had been joined by an unkempt individual, his hands thrust deep in his pockets and his hat pulled well down over his eyes. Instantly he struck me as familiar, possibly a mere coincidence, but one which I tried idly but unsuccessfully to trace. Apparently he was bothered by no such recollection, but continued to stare straight in front

of him. I returned to my bee and my contemplation, had indeed almost forgotten the interruption, when a hand was quietly laid on my arm, and a voice —*sotto voce*—said in my ear, "Tell M——"—he mentioned a well-known Republican sympathizer—"that the white rabbit has run around the plum tree."

In another moment he was lounging off as casually as he had come. Something in his walk suddenly brought conviction to my mind—he was the same tall foreigner who had been one of my fellow-travellers across the ocean the previous March. But how had he known I was to sup with M—— and his wife that evening? It might all be a hoax, or was he in difficult straits to get a message to headquarters? Had I not been in Ireland and expected the unexpected, I should have ignored the whole incident. As it was, I was reminded of Rosebery's simile in regard to Ireland—"the incautious explorer who ventures near the crater finds the treacherous surface yield, and himself plunged into the fiery marl."

There seemed to me no alternative but to relate the incident and deliver the message, which I did that evening, word for word, with, I will confess, a trace of inward excitement. M—— showed no surprise, but there was intense relief in his murmured "Thank God!" He offered no explanation, I offered no comment, but the recollection haunted me constantly for weeks, and haunts me still as I recount it. A few months later M—— fell in the civil war. The strange young man has not since crossed my path.

CHAPTER XII

"IF IRELAND GOES . . ."

THAT evening, long after the M——'s and I had parted, I sat at the window of my bedroom in the hotel, staring into the dusk. Twilight in Ireland, during May and June, is a delightful languishing affair, translucent enough to read by until past eleven o'clock.

It was the hour for dreaming, but I could not dream. To tell the truth, I was drifting along the fresh avenues of thought opened to me by the stranger in the park. As the night threw its shadows about me and stars began to peep faintly down through the gathering gloom, the outline of the roofs beneath my window grew dimmer and dimmer. In the distance, guns rumbled softly, jarring the tranquillity. Otherwise, quiet hung over Dublin, the dead quiet which portends the coming of a storm.

How artfully my spider had spun his web, light as air to pass undetected and strong as steel to be withstood! Most spiders, with a remarkable instinct for fair play, give their flies a chance to escape. Not so this variety.

Madness, topsy-turvy understanding of life, charm, wit, genius—all that made for romance was in Ireland, blood of her blood, bone of her bone, marrow of her marrow. Carried away by an ideal, she had sown the seeds of her own disenchantment.

Her dreams for the Gael she had laid at the feet of pagan gods, and, inspired as she was by a recklessness, particularly of human life, she was fast destroying the foundation of the kingdom she sought to establish.

For my own part, this Ireland, sweeping aside trivial circumstance, and becoming selfless in its effort, was stealing into me, carrying me along with the rest. I was fascinated by the fervour, the like of which I had not encountered since the war. But on this night, my credulity shaken by my experience of the afternoon, I felt aghast at the pitiful waste of so much priceless energy. These thoughts, sent to join other thoughts winging their way along the cool night air, brought my spider to me, *en silhouette*, creeping, with merciless intent, to and fro over the gossamer threads of its web, not as a creature of imagination but as a living reality. If fate would but be kind and reveal to me its identity!

There must be those who regarded with terror this precipice toward which Ireland was rushing. Instinct made me believe that Michael Collins was one of them. But would he be destroyed before his leadership could prevail?

I pondered this question with others for hours, until I fancied I could see the dawn shyly appearing behind the eastern chimney-pots. Fearing to turn on a light at that unearthly hour, I crept to bed in the dark. I must have fallen off, when a revolver shot, shattering as I thought my keyhole, brought me rolling to the floor. Where on earth it came from to this day remains a mystery. The Free

State troops on guard in the corridor came running to my door, but were evidently convinced by my startled face that my bewilderment equalled theirs. As a matter of fact, I was far too annoyed at the sudden interruption of pleasant dreams to await their blundering efforts to establish the source.

The next morning I awoke with a distinct feeling of expectation. The doubts among which I had been floundering had cleared, and although I could not then have put my conviction into words, I see now that the vast scope of this amazing enterprise had suddenly opened before me. At the same time, I realized that questioning would be a most dangerous course to pursue ; that the way to increase my knowledge was to follow my intuition and drift in whatever direction it might lead.

On this morning, a particularly sunshiny one, my footsteps turned towards the Childers'. I found Mrs. Childers calmer than on my former visit, in fact so calm that again I marvelled. She was a person over whose face few changes of expression passed, who rarely, as is common among women, talked with her hands. To all outward appearance, her poise was her armour.

The cheerfulness of the sun shining directly upon us reflected the brilliance of the day and emphasized our relief that for the meantime all was peace and quiet. At first we talked of abstractions, and Mrs. Childers confessed her passion for human nature.

A short half-hour, however, and my hostess was back on the all-consuming subject of Ireland. For the first time I wondered what effect, if any, her

enforced retirement from the world of affairs had had upon her outlook. I remembered a remark of Moira's, "Had Molly only been a *well* woman, she would have had the whole of Ireland at her feet."

That morning, however, she seemed almost obsessed with the thought of how many different countries England was holding "against their will," although of her own accord she qualified this statement by admitting that the relations between Great Britain and Canada were based on mutual trust. Immediately she refuted these words by adding, "But the British have even there tried to kill the possibility of freedom."

The current belief that Smuts was now an imperialist had become rooted in the Childers' minds, and went hand in hand with a fear that the United States also was becoming imperialistic. That England wished to hold Ireland as a guard against this new United States, Mrs. Childers herself was firmly convinced. No European nation would be in a position to attack Britain for centuries.

News from Ulster had just come in to them, with information of the extent to which British troops were being massed in the North. Should the South get her Republic, Ulster "*must be forced even against her will*" to unite with them. Idly curious, I asked the size of the I.R.A. Mrs. Childers thought for a moment before answering, then explained that the Republican Army was a nebulous force of which no complete count could ever be made.

This morning I fancied I caught a new tone in the charming voice, a tone of defiance which caused

me to fall silent, wondering what could have evoked it. Over and over, the gentle lady declared her passion for human nature, in that curious way she had of repeating things as if to convince herself. Suddenly, nettled perhaps by my silence, she snapped her fingers and made a declaration to which I listened with amazement.

"Curiously enough, Ireland is the keystone in the arch of the predatory system. What happens here will happen in other parts of the Empire. Britain has no right to hold all these people by force! Egypt and India—why should they be kept under by an alien hand? It is not for Ireland *alone* we are struggling. I do not care that"—again she snapped her fingers—"for the independence of Ireland; *it is simply if Ireland goes the whole structure will fall.*"

There flashed across my mind a paragraph in a pamphlet which she had given me on my last visit, entitled *Military Rule in Ireland*, containing a series of eight articles written by Erskine Childers to the *Daily News* (London), from March to May 1920, collectively reprinted the same year with an additional chapter. It read as follows:

> "I send with this one word of warning to the English readers of the Daily News. *This Irish War, small as it may seem now, will, if it is persisted in, corrupt and eventually ruin not only your Army, but your nation and your Empire itself.*"[1]
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> . . . . .

[1] Author's italics.

These days were full of stirring events. On Tuesday, May 23rd, at the meeting of the Ardfheis, or holy of holies of Sinn Fein, I saw for myself the general character of the people over whom an alien hand had made so sweeping a conquest. The gathering was composed of delegates from every Sinn Fein club in Ireland, North and South, near as well as remote. It was held in the Round Room of the Mansion House, that famous and historic building which deserves a word of description.

The Mansion House is the official residence of the Lord Mayor. If one is calling on the Lord Mayor, as I did on several occasions, one enters through a massive front door which has the appearance of having swung on the same hinges for centuries. One finds oneself in a spacious hall, fashioned of oak, with doors on either side, great heavy doors also of oak. There is a general impression of age and feudal majesty, augmented somewhat by the red velvet coverings and the pieces of armour hanging on the walls.

The Round Room, where public meetings are held, is a separate building, so that to reach it one does not enter through the front door of the Mansion House, but walks to a side gate, from which one passes through a rather barren out-building. The assembly room itself is large and circular with a balcony surrounding the upper portion, and is hung with paintings of Lord Mayors generations back. Everywhere flags droop from their masts, some in tatters, others grimy with use and the dust of years. Facing the entrance is the platform, at

either side of which, for this particular occasion, temporary stands had been erected.

Although the opening of the Ardfheis was fixed for ten o'clock, it was eleven or after before the meeting was brought to order. Those of us who arrived early, about nine-thirty, had a chance to observe the crowd as it assembled. There were old men as well as young, a few women, all drawn chiefly from the labouring classes. Altogether it was an amazing spectacle, one which gave a more accurate sense of the real extent of the Republican movement over the country at large.

There were men in that audience whose hands were red with blood, who in a normal and ordered community would have been hanged several times over. Nor would they have been found regretful for their acts; once stirred, their belief in the justice of what they were doing was as profound as in any Crusader of olden times. To those from the North, Protestantism was anathema. They believed that by wiping out its following they were ridding their country of a scourge. There were others, too, young and ignorant, to whom "Ireland" was synonymous with thrilling adventure. And there was the minority, among whom were young men as well as old, who trembled for the future, and would gladly have followed Griffith in his non-militant policy.

These conflicting emotions, clearly visible on the upturned faces, sobered those of us who were detached onlookers. They expressed the varying elements which contribute to Ireland's difficulties, and offer the key to her strange fascination.

Suspense was broken when the notables arrived. Mr. de Valera, the presiding officer, entered the room with Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, Cathal Brugha, Harry Boland and several others following meekly in his wake. A few moments later, the dramatic sight of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith seated one on either side of de Valera quickened every pulse.

The Pact, the terms of which were roughly laid before the meeting, was rushed through, and no alternative left but to approve it. However, the same note which Cathal Brugha had struck in Dail Eireann a week before was again sounded, when one or two delegates from Ulster tried to concentrate the attention of the meeting on a direct attack against the North. The emotions of the gathering were soon aroused, nay were becoming acute, when something occurred which, for my own part, caused me to stifle an instinctive "Bravo!"

Michael Collins, unable to bear the strain a second longer, jumped to his feet. The next moment found him defying any attack against the Protestants of Ulster, until Catholics ceased their outrages against Protestants or Loyalists in Southern Ireland. Reprisals against Catholics in the North, he reminded them, had taken place in answer to outrages which had been directed for months against Protestants and Loyalists in the South. The Provisional Government had information which prevented them from taking active measures to attack the Six Counties until the miseries in the South could at least be controlled.

The rare courage that Collins had already exhibited in Dail Eireann was for the second time magnificently displayed. None knew better than he how readily such a body of men and women, inspired by the impassioned appeals to which they had been listening, could be stirred to madness.

He sat down amid harsh cries resounding against him from every part of the hall, a demonstration only quieted when de Valera brought the meeting to a speedy close.

There could be no doubt that the Republicans considered the Pact a victory for their side, but from that moment all doubt vanished from my mind as to the course Michael Collins would ultimately pursue.

I like to recall this brave picture of him at bay before the Ardfheis. His sins in the past to innocent people had been sufficiently serious to cause him to try to capture certain documents in the Irish Office in London, while his last effort to wrest a Republican Constitution from the British had so far not taken place. None the less, I felt sure that something in him was righting itself, and, could the hands of his enemies only be stayed, he might yet become Ireland's Man of Destiny.

On May 27th, shortly after this meeting of the Ardfheis, Collins and Griffith were summoned to London. News of the Pact had been disquieting to the British Government.

Violence was still harassing Dublin as well as the country districts, while the leaders on both sides

continued to entrench themselves by further negotiation and intrigue. In fact, the Republicans were so busy that I found it difficult to get hold of any of them. Although Moira did lunch with me shortly after the meeting of the Ardfheis, I found her unusually reticent. I suspected her of a desire to avoid the Republicans as much as the Free Staters. Perhaps she knew too much of what was going on in both camps. I had already found that whenever her activities were greatest, her reserve became unshakable. On these occasions, the one subject to which she warmed was reference to her beloved Molly Childers. During the meal—we were lunching, as it happened, at my hotel—she was called to the telephone, and came back hurriedly to convey an invitation from Mrs. Childers for the next afternoon.

My visit to Mrs. Childers the next day was destined to be my last.

I had just boarded the tram for her house and paid my fare, when a man got in who presented a most striking appearance. His clothes were a dark shade of brown, designed, it would seem, to match his eyes, which were startlingly large and of the same rich colour. His tie, his shoes and his socks, all carefully matched, completed the *ensemble*. As a set-off to this costume, he wore a black hat of soft felt, with a large brim shaped something like that of a sombrero. A fine figure of a man he was, who became at once a cynosure for all eyes.

The tram had poked comfortably along for some moments, when the stranger touched me lightly

on the shoulder, enquiring the way to a certain street. Now, it is one of my peculiarities that names of streets always and for ever elude me. Thus I could not give my interlocutor the information he desired, although, as it happened, we were both headed for the same stop. He appealed to two ladies sitting opposite. The information obtained, he again turned to me, this time to ask how I had enjoyed the meeting of the Ardfheis. To my more or less non-committal answer, he replied emphatically that it was the only sensible meeting he had ever attended in Ireland. He then casually remarked that he had seen me three times in the same number of days. Amused, I gave an enigmatic reply.

It turned out that we were both on our way to Mrs. Childers', and we met formally on her hearth-rug a few moments later.

She had with her that afternoon another guest, a certain Father Hackett, a Jesuit priest, an ardent Republican as well as an extremely cultured gentleman. In the conversation he took little share beyond creating the impression that on all controversial points he was entirely in accord with Mrs. Childers. He even became emphatic when, with her, he justified some of the policy of the extremists. In the main, however, he listened with great concentration, his eyes gleaming with intelligence.

The stranger in the tram proved to be Shaw Desmond, the author, just returned from America. An odd twinkle danced in Mrs. Childers' eye as she talked to him. He was, it seemed, a great

admirer and staunch supporter of Arthur Griffith, and shared the conviction held by some that Griffith really believed in a dual monarchy. Here, for the first time, Mrs. Childers admitted that neither she nor her husband had ever really been sure of how far Griffith went in his doctrine of Sinn Fein. They had distrusted him from the first.

The absence of bitterness in Mrs. Childers' tone as she spoke of Griffith was a contrast to the acidity with which Griffith referred to her husband in Dail Eireann. Her manner was infinitely remote. Once she did attribute words to him which he had not uttered—it happened that I had been present at the meeting of the Dail which she was quoting—but she took my correction with perfect good grace.

The discussion drifted, as all such discussions must inevitably drift, to Great Britain. It was then that Shaw Desmond spoke his mind about England. "She is bad inside as well as out." In his opinion the British Empire was doomed. It was only a matter of time before she went the way of all Empires.

With quiet determination Mrs. Childers re-echoed, "It must be doomed. It cannot be allowed to go on."

But she expressed her sorrow for the "poor English people," who were not responsible, and who had been for so long oppressed by a "pernicious" Government.

Mr. Desmond believed, however, that strife between Great Britain and the United States was

inevitable, a view he had found reciprocated by many prominent Americans, whom he mentioned by name.

One of them with distinctly anti-British sentiments was of German and Jewish origin. A Prussian, he became a British subject prior to the war. Later he had moved to New York, where he now lived, and had become an American citizen. I knew him to be a person of prominence and vast wealth. Some years before, I had heard his name mentioned in another connexion, when he had offered a friend of mine one hundred thousand dollars for the use of any organization which could secure for him a British title. Mr. Desmond had been closeted with this gentleman for some hours, during which he had expressed profound sympathy for the Republican cause in Ireland. Curiously enough, the same individual had once been a close associate of a man reputed to have financed Trotsky's return to Russia.

Mrs. Childers spoke of the part she hoped America would play toward the accomplishment of an Irish Republic. She wished the United States Government to assure Great Britain, "Give Ireland a Republic and we will guarantee the neutrality of Ireland."

Despite his views, Shaw Desmond believed that the Free State was the best solution for the time being. Just what lay in the back of his mind I do not know, nor could I guess. Perhaps, Irish fashion, he did not know himself, and would be captured and swayed by the personalities of the moment.

CHAPTER XIII

AN ENCOUNTER

I ARRIVED at Euston between four and five o'clock on May 25th, to find London in the throes of a heat wave. The station was stifling, the air close, and as oppressive as in a greenhouse. The sleepy porter at the hotel where I had left my belongings, balked at rescuing them from the trunk-room at that hour. "Bit early, miss," he grumbled. I sympathized with his inertia as in the nature of my own. But persistence and the magic of a shilling won, and breakfast found me more comfortably and suitably attired.

That day I wandered about the streets aimlessly, oddly surprised to find things going along exactly as usual. The same crowds were sweeping down Piccadilly; the same nice-looking people were turning into the shops on Bond Street; the same traffic was pouring as usual past Hyde Park Corner; within the Park the same fashionable crowds thronged the Row, for the season was already well along. Just so little did this British world seem affected by the currents rushing swiftly and madly on the other side of the Channel!

I strolled down to Westminster Bridge; to the Houses of Parliament; Westminster Abbey, with its grave of an Unknown Warrior: *he* might have

been an Irishman, who knows? Then up Whitehall, past the Cenotaph, with its burden of fresh flowers, and up the Mall to Buckingham Palace. It was on the Mall that I passed an American, stumbling along, his head buried in a book, the title of which all who passed craned their necks to see. It read *A Wanderer in London*. On all sides, wherever I looked, I saw stability, tradition, grandeur. True, the order of things was changing, visibly, but stumbling along like my American, a wanderer, not in London only, but along the highways of the Old World and the New. No matter how eagerly enthusiasts might prophesy the disintegration wrecking the foundations of an Empire they chose to despise, it occurred to me, those who undertook to hasten the process would have a long and weary road to travel.

And as I loitered, I observed the passers-by, and for the first time formed the conclusion that the British were separated from the Irish, less by distance than by temperament. Notwithstanding the saddened and lean faces of many of the people thronging the streets, poise was coming back; it would not now be easy to shatter their self-confidence. All classes were running "true to form," playing the game, a little grimly perhaps, but none the less with due observance of its rules and regulations, and with a stolid and traditional indifference to ill-natured criticism from the outside.

A sentence of Terence McSwiney's *Principles of Freedom* circled in my mind as a squirrel circles in a

cage. "In the gross materialism and greed of empire that is now the ruling passion with the enemy, there is apparently little hope of a transformation that will make them spiritual, high minded and generous." In the bearing of those about me I saw pride; pride, in which suffering had mingled to write its story deep upon their faces; suffering too and solemn purpose. "*These are they which have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white.*"

It was past eight o'clock when I turned up again at my hotel. I found that someone had sought me on the telephone during the morning and afternoon. I was surprised, slightly taken aback perhaps, because I knew of no one in London in touch with my whereabouts, or for that matter interested in them.

Those who recall the events of June 1922 know that neither Michael Collins nor Arthur Griffith gave a clear enough explanation of the terms of the Pact to satisfy the British Government. Although Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, maintained outward calm, his remarks in the House of Commons showed him to be more than usually reticent.

That the British would concede Ireland a Republic seemed doubtful, nor would Dublin be likely to persuade the United States to press her sympathetic attitude further. The words of the American newspaper correspondent—"the United States will not aid Ireland until Ireland has some-

thing the United States wants for herself"—however cynical, bore in a measure upon the Republican position.

One morning, June 22nd, I was enjoying a quiet saunter through the Green Park when I espied two gentlemen approaching me whose acquaintance I had made in Dublin. They were coming along slowly, with bent heads, absorbed, evidently, in their conversation. Not wishing to intrude, I turned down a side path and continued my walk in the opposite direction. The encounter, casual as it was, disturbed me, because I knew that these two were up to their necks in Republican intrigue, and I had an uneasy feeling that they were unlikely to be in London unless a plot of some sort was finding its way across the Channel. Possibly Art O'Brien considered that the "psychological" moment had arrived. . . .

The same afternoon, about four o'clock, London was stupefied when special editions announced the murder of Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the British General Staff. It was the act which finally convinced me of the sheer madness of my friends across the Channel. To the inhabitants of Britain, and particularly of London, it illumined the lengths to which certain Irishmen were prepared to go. The day was dark and dull, and the anger which the deed inspired was also dark and dull. Again, as in all national emergencies, the Great British Public became One.

I guessed at once that the murder had been manœuvred with deliberate intent. In other

words, I knew it to be the final attempt on the part of the diabolical mind directing events in Ireland to force the return of the British. In attacking Sir Henry Wilson, they could not have chosen a more spectacular figure. Not merely because he was an Ulsterman, but because, as head of the British General Staff, he occupied a place of dramatic importance in the eyes of the British people.

Accounts of the outrage, which filled the papers the following morning, gave striking evidence of that vast gulf of temperament dividing the inhabitants of the two islands. Sir Henry Wilson had been attacked as he descended from a taxi-cab, unarmed, in front of his doorway in Eaton Place. His assailants, heavily armed, came at him from either side, and did not cease firing when they saw that their man was done. As soon as they were discovered, they took flight, and were pursued by every man, woman or child near the scene. As they ran they turned to fire, but their pursuers paid no heed and followed after. Workmen picked up their shovels and ran on ; taxi-cabs were commandeered by elderly men in top hats ; all of whom pursued the ruffians with only one thought in mind, their capture. And still the fugitives emptied and refilled and emptied their revolvers. Perhaps a wild ideal could have inspired the British to an act equally cowardly and brutal. For my own part, I doubt it, simply because the spirit of fair play which dominates the Anglo-Saxon had never become rooted in Ireland. They see things differently, that is all.

The funeral, which took place on Monday, June 26th, in St. Paul's Cathedral, will for ever remain symbolic of those very insuperable obstacles against which the Republicans and those behind them in Ireland were struggling. Yet, by endeavouring to undermine the foundations of so gigantic a structure, my spider had employed the only possible means of success.

For two hours I stood in the crowd on the steps of St. Paul's. The doors had not yet been opened, so there was plenty of time to get in touch with the emotions of that vast throng. The rain, falling in torrents, had been disregarded, and crowds had stood for hours lining the route over which the procession would pass, to offer a last salutation. Disgust and anger, dull, smouldering anger, toward Ireland and the Irish people were manifest everywhere. As the woman standing next to me expressed herself to a friend, " I'm sick of Ireland, and I pray I'll never have to send my boy there to be shot down like a dog ! "

Then the doors were opened and we surged forward.

The solemn procession which filed slowly through the great doors down the nave was manifest of the pride and strength of Empire. Of something intangible besides ; some quality of the stone and mortar knitting together the intricate parts of this structure ; something which is seen in a misty dawn on English fields, or hangs about the little trim white cottages dotting her gentle hill-sides. Something that occasionally embodies itself in an

individual; but something, too, which for a reason unexplained occasionally rouses the antagonism—it may be the jealousy—of other peoples. It was there in St. Paul's that morning.

Generals in full-dress uniform; high officers of State; Foreign Ambassadors; surrounded by a hushed and solemn throng of Commoners, voiced their resentment by a silence so complete, that the only sound which filled the great building during the pauses in the service was the gentle cooing of a few pigeons in the rafters high overhead. Against a force so tremendous, spiritually and materially, a master mind had had the temerity to pit itself.

I have said that the motive for killing Sir Henry Wilson seemed to me simply part of that desire to bring the British back to Ireland, reiterated over and over to me by individual Republicans. At the same time, to commit themselves to so cowardly an act seemed to indicate desperation. Nor did it succeed. Although the British Government was faced with insuperable difficulties, it managed, despite bitter criticism, to maintain its poise. Clearly, had the British gone back to Ireland provoked as they were, they would have played directly into the hands of the extreme elements. The murder of Sir Henry Wilson, however, did bring home to a people, long accustomed to "trouble in Ireland," a more thorough appreciation of the horrors through which that little country had passed since the Easter Rebellion of 1916.

On my side, I had little doubt that the vague

misgivings occasioned by the sight of the two Republicans passing through the Green Park on the morning of the tragedy, were not without foundation.

However, the communications which passed between London and Dublin during the next few days brought the Free State to a decision. Although at the time nothing was said, I learned some months later that many changes had to be made in the Constitution which Collins presented to the British Government, who, at last, realized the lengths to which the people across the Channel were determined to go.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BLACK NORTH

These events were but a few days old when I found myself speeding once more toward Holyhead. This time I was bound for Ulster, not moved with the same thrill of expectancy as on my journey to Dublin, but with my appetite for knowledge, so far merely whetted, grown to a more embracing capacity. Nor was I ignorant of the element of danger which lent spice to any adventure in Ireland during these days of storm and travail. Innocent as my pursuit of knowledge might be, nothing would save me should I be suspected of an ulterior motive.

At Holyhead, travellers were searched with more care than formerly; while on the boat the number of sullen, uncouth young men seemed to have increased. Three of these, still in their early twenties, by making their desire to avoid scrutiny evident, became a magnet for all eyes. Their nerves were jumpy and kept them pacing the decks restlessly, their hats pulled so far over their foreheads as completely to shadow their eyes. Such is the manner of revolutionaries.

My fellow-travellers, with few exceptions, were *en route* for Dublin, so when I boarded the Belfast train at Kingstown, I found myself alone in a compartment. The train pulled into Dublin for a few moments on the way through. I remarked

how leaden the sky was at that early hour ; a trivial thing to notice perhaps, but it struck me because the station was more than ever gloomy and silent ; infernally silent. Not a soul was about. Yet, straining to penetrate the silence, did I imagine I heard a low rumble in the distance ? Just then, newspapers brought in by the guard claimed my attention. The fresh interest dispelled the conjecture which these sounds had aroused.

Once clear of the grimy chimneys of the city, we sped away, mile after mile, into the open country. The sun, at first shyly concealing itself behind billows of cloud, burst forth exultantly over the vivid green hill-sides. However, I was not misled on this occasion, by the peaceful aspect of the cottages nestling in the valleys or beneath the brow of a hill.

The diminutive but rotund waiter in the dining-car was bubbling over, delighted to have an audience to whom he might spread his news. He began with the porridge.

"Mebbe ye're afther hearin' the latest from Dooblin, mi lady ? " he inquired.

Between mouthfuls, I signified that I had not.

" Sure, an' its civil war broke out this mornin'. Mick's afther kickin' Rory out of the Four Courts."

Small wonder, then, that the station had been deserted and dreary, nor had that ominous rumble in the distance been my fancy. With the ham and eggs, the little man enlarged at some length on the " turrible " state of Ireland. Inwardly I was full of chagrin that this news had reached me just too late to allow me to stop off.

I was not surprised, on the contrary. Michael Collins had at last thrown down his glove, and proved beyond doubt that his pledge and his honour were analogous.

The remainder of the journey left me time to reflect over this latest turn of fate. There were many persons whose movements I would have given a good deal to know that morning, but the chance had hopped through my fingers, and I was left instead to empty speculations.

The country became completely beautiful as we covered the miles; the farms more trim and well ordered. Outside Dundalk, where Sinn Fein was usually full of activity, the train slowed down. Only a few days back, a bridge was blown up a moment or two before the arrival of the Belfast train, which, as luck had it, was stopped in time to prevent serious casualties. Firing at the Dublin-Belfast express was one of the amusements in which the Republicans most indulged. On this morning, however, with the I.R.A. fully engaged elsewhere, we had a peaceful entry and ample quiet to enjoy the pretty and cheerful aspect of the station, with its hanging baskets of flowering geraniums.

Dundalk is not far south of the Ulster Border. The smartness of its station may be taken as an indication of the differences of character separating the two types of Irish, differences which become more marked as the train draws nearer to Belfast. A traveller notices that the stations are cleaner, and that the station-masters, less nonchalant, pay more attention to the rules of scheduled time.

Rattling across the city in an old cab to my hotel, I passed through the centre of the manufacturing district, where serious disturbances had taken place. The buildings were riddled with bullet holes ; here and there a house had been burned to the ground, or a group of houses, or a shop, and the street cars, or trams, were still covered with wire netting as a protection against bombs. While I had expected to see some indications of violence, I was overwhelmed at seeing so much.

Yet people showed no sense of timidity, and went about their business as usual, doggedness and sullen determination expressing itself in their walk and bearing. Certainly they were grim ; but there was little to call forth gaiety.

In Belfast, news of the outbreak of civil war in Dublin was received with a measure of relief, and the full conviction that the Six Counties would now have a space in which to breathe more freely. It was indeed significant, that serious outbreaks of violence in Ulster had been lessening for some few days, during which, rumour had it, the gunmen were crossing back to the South in droves.

For my own part I never became reconciled to the dreariness of Belfast. It is reminiscent of Glasgow without Glasgow's proportions, for it has the same squalor, the same sordid vistas, the same poverty, the same drunkenness ; albeit it is a great manufacturing centre inhabited by industrious, well-to-do, law-abiding citizens. There are beautiful homes

on the outskirts of the city, surrounded by luxurious gardens, while the most lovely country can be reached easily by tram. Much as I enjoyed the hospitality of the one and the freedom of the other, neither mellowed the distress everywhere apparent in the streets through which I passed to and from my hotel. Strangely enough, although I did not know it at the time, it is the influx of peoples from Southern Ireland that has contributed to the miseries on the Clydeside, as well as to the wretchedness of sections of Belfast.

Compared with Dublin, however, Belfast teemed with business.

The day-time was now more or less quiet, but night-fall still ushered in a period of noise and violence. From curfew, at ten o'clock in the evening, till dawn, there was an uninterrupted rat-tat-tat of machine-gun fire, accompanied by the dull thud of bomb explosions. Sometimes, the firing was close to the hotel, now and then a bullet sang past the windows ; again it would be more distant. But people were too used to it to bother, and accepted noisy nights as a matter of course.

Also, there was more reticence in Belfast than there had been in Dublin, and while suspicion flourished no less, expression of it was different.

This new atmosphere left me quite at sea, armed me with misgivings, though for what reason I could not have said. I had set myself to unravel the threads of the same web I had encountered in Dublin. Possibly I already sensed the obstacles, which, during the next few days, loomed large in my path.

CHAPTER XV

REASON AND INSANITY

Said Voltaire, "Heaven in forming us mixed our life with reason and insanity; these elements of our imperfect being, they compose every man, they form his essence."

Nowhere do reason and insanity flower more triumphantly than in Belfast. In Southern Ireland, where insanity is less adulterated, Belfast is referred to as the heart of the "Black North," a nickname uttered usually in a tone of ill-concealed contempt.

But if the term "black" refers to the quality of dourness which is part of the Ulsterman's Scottish inheritance, from the same source this rugged Northerner has received a capacity for industry and a genius for financial stability, unrivalled in other parts of Ireland. As a further contrast with his neighbours of the Twenty-Six Counties, in religion he is intensely, virulently, Protestant; nor is it unjust that he should consider himself inalienably Irish. The Scottish peoples who settled in the North have lived for centuries on Irish soil, they have worked for their adopted country, they have fought for her, they have intermarried with those who preceded them across the Irish Sea, and gradually become quite as integral to Irish civilization as the Normans and Danes who settled in the

Southern Counties several centuries before. So, while the Scottish influx in Cromwell's time and since, has had a profound influence on the development of the people in those regions of Ireland whose boundaries were clarified by the Battle of the Boyne, those directly descended are now a composite of the two nations, neither wholly Irish nor wholly Scotch.

The difference between the Scottish and the Irish temperaments is readily discernible. While the Irish Celt permits his imagination to run away with his sense of probability, the Scottish Celt is shrewdly conscious of the pitfalls into which unbridled fancy might lead him; his sensibilities have become broadened and mellowed by his contact with world affairs. In short, the Irish Celt, preoccupied with his own concerns, has reaped the disadvantage of too much isolation. Ulster, "going Protestantism blind," has become enmeshed by petty and crude prejudices, while the South, or at least a section of it, has no compunction in throwing ethics to the winds, and repeatedly, not always to her own advantage, making "England's extremity Ireland's opportunity."

The ripple of agitation which has been running through Scotland of late years, centring itself in the Clydeside districts, has been coincident with the flow of immigrants from Southern Ireland into Scotland during and since the war. The Scotsman has little inclination for self-government; he knows too well the limits which "freedom," so expressed, would put on his material well-being;

the interests of his country are best served if linked with those of the Empire or Commonwealth. Nor does he forget that many of the most brilliant and polished of British statesmen at Westminster, hail like himself from North of the Tweed. So, while in thought and habit the peoples of Northern and Southern Ireland are poles apart, both are the victims of an acute *ego*, a vivid self-absorption. As for their uniting together under a common Government, such a thing is inconceivable. Two barriers stand in the way; the first, religious, the second, economic. With the actual *per capita* wealth of Ireland concentrated in Ulster, it is not unnatural to find a conviction firmly rooted in the mind of the Ulsterman that the Southerner, when he talks of union, is after Ulster's wealth and nothing more.

General Smuts of South Africa, in his famous letter to Mr. de Valera, dated August 4th, 1921, expressed the belief that "the force of community of interests will over a period of years prove so great and compelling that Ulster will herself decide to join the Irish State." But in the same letter he comments, "the difficulty in Ireland is no longer a constitutional difficulty . . . It is the human difficulty which remains. The Irish question is no longer a constitutional, but mostly a human problem."

A quality of self-righteousness and a sense of superiority are part of the Ulsterman's contributions to the "human problem." They explain the ill-favour with which the inhabitants of the

Six Counties are often regarded. Although, during the war, loyalty to Britain was not displayed in any of the British Dominions more proudly than in Ulster, the stranger notices a ready antagonism toward Great Britain in Northern as in Southern Ireland, only in the former the prejudice is swamped by an intense antagonism toward the South. Scottish shrewdness warns the Ulsterman to maintain close association with the Empire, so while he is undeniably loyal, his loyalty is imbued with self-interest. Certainly, the feeling against the British Government of 1922 was intense; Lloyd George and his associates had shaken hands with "murderers" and "condoned murder." When I heard these statements, I thought of the "private agreements" which, according to the extreme Republicans, Lloyd George and his associates were supposed to have had with Sir James Craig.

There is little to choose, so far as balance is concerned, between the extreme Ulster point of view on the one hand and the extreme Republican point of view on the other. Both are thoroughly selfish, thoroughly illogical and thoroughly dangerous to the welfare of Ireland. The British Government, whatever its faults or mistakes in administration, was undeniably between the devil and the deep sea; the craft of Statesmanship tossed hither and thither in a political whirlpool.

Yet Ulster alone of all Ireland has an anchor down. Here, there is no living on the unreality of hope. The presence of a strong middle class too is a tremendous asset. From this source the

Government officials are largely recruited, although the scions of a few old families share the functions of Government.

In these matters of rank Ireland lags behind a democratic age, and boasts an attitude of mind obsolete elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It was an Irishman who first suggested such comparisons to me, and drew an analogy between the Duke of Devonshire in England and the Marquess of Londonderry in Ireland. The Duke lives with his tenants on terms of equality, from which a spirit of comradeship is not lacking. That he maintained similar relations with his Irish tenants at his magnificent estate, Lismore, on the borders of Cork and Waterford, was shown by the careful manner in which they guarded the castle from harm during these years of agitation. He would not dream of regulating the lives of persons less fortunate than himself—rather they would regulate his. On the other hand, Lord Londonderry, who served the Ulster Government as the Minister of Education, has been jocularly described as " King of the Six Counties." Fortunately, he is well equipped to deal with power moderately and wisely. Yet the attitude of his colleagues towards him, is a striking example of the influence which birth and property still exert on the Irish imagination.

As for the stranger in Belfast, he is immediately confronted by a wall of suspicion, which he scales with no slight difficulty, before he ascertains facts about the people and politics of the Six Counties.

Without the *proper*—a word to which emphasis must be given—introductions, a quest of this sort would be futile.

Two instances occurred to warn me, that while all might seem secure on the surface, I was living temporarily in a community in which there were pitfalls on every side. A man whom I had met casually in Dublin cautioned me that a stranger venturing to Belfast after having been in Southern Ireland during these months of stress, was taking a long chance; "Not only are the Northerners inordinately suspicious," he had said, "but the meshes of intrigue are so intricate that it is perfectly on the cards for someone in Dublin to pass the word and start the ball rolling against you in Belfast." He then mentioned a young man, who had set out on an adventure similar to mine. He had sought conversation with leaders of the different factions, in an effort to put himself in their place, see with their eyes. One day, quite inadvertently, he had been present when a plan for the destruction of a section of the city was discussed and perfected. In his zeal and youthfulness, he had pleaded with his acquaintances. They shot him on the spot. "Dead men tell no tales," commented my informer.

What really happened in my own case I do not know. It was not long, however, before I realized that I was the object of suspicion. When I found myself invited to lunch with the American wife of a prominent Ulster business man, I accepted with pleasure, grateful for an opportunity to meet representative Ulster folk. In the afternoon, my

hostess took me on to a tennis party at a perfectly delightful house some distance beyond the city limits. Seldom near the environs of a large city does one find so enchanting a place, full of the sweetness of grass and river. The dining-room, where tea was served, occupied the old and unique portion of the house; a two-steps-down affair below the garden level, with two sides opening on to a terrace of roses, wall-flowers, and delphiniums. The host, a tall, rather distinguished-looking man, had lately returned from South America, where he had spent some months in the interests of the Ulster Government.

During the course of the afternoon, I was asked to see an American trained nurse the following week, who had been working for a year or more in different parts of Ireland. I acquiesced willingly enough. The following week, however, our meeting was called off peremptorily. There was nothing to do but view my plight with tolerance and amusement. Anything I had said or done would have complicated my position further, and solidified into conviction what was now but idle suspicion. I felt as a fly must feel " with the first strand of cobweb round his hind leg."

One afternoon I found myself watching a session of the Lower House. A greater contrast between this House of Commons in the North, and Dail Eireann in the South, could hardly be imagined. There was but one other spectator beside myself that day. Somewhat ruefully I contemplated the empty brown benches about me

Beyond the barrier, a small group of well-dressed, well-to-do, ponderous business men despatched the business of Government. Some of them looked sleepy, others looked concerned, but on every countenance sat an expression of the greatest solemnity. Where Dail Eireann ignored Parliamentary procedure, the Ulster House of Commons observed the forms with rigid punctiliousness. There was none of the brilliance, the easy rhetoric, the excitement, or the vivid clash of personality about this gathering, which had amazed the onlooker day after day in Dail Eireann. They might almost have had an overdose of solitude. Like modern " ancients " they sat, with neat backs and white shirt-fronts ; their gravity challenging one's sense of proportion. At this lavish expense of time and energy were the Six Counties governed !

Ergo, again we witness the lack of humour in the Irish !

After the meeting I met Sir James Craig, Premier of Northern Ireland ; Sir Dawson Bates, the Home Secretary ; and several other members of the Cabinet.

Sir James Craig, immensely likeable, is akin in manner to a successful American business man. In appearance heavy and ruddy—Ulstermen are not as a rule finely chiselled—he has an almost child-like simplicity of bearing and guise. While there is nothing subtle or particularly intellectual about him, he is kindly, genial, essentially a man of power. On just one point he is consistently unrelenting—he will never lend himself to an alliance with the

Free State. Over the unfriendly criticism directed toward Ulster again and again from the outside world, Sir James confessed himself disturbed. It was an obstacle he and his colleagues were anxious to overcome.

Yet, in the next breath, I heard him suggesting a visit to the shipyards and cotton mills, as one of the chief sources from which it is possible to recruit information. In this suggestion he showed a lack of imagination, a perilous inability to grasp the necessity of colour to brighten Ulster's drab and dour exterior. As for the red tape of Government, Sir James disliked it, and believed that if a thing was right it should be done, if necessary, by unconstitutional means.

Sir James Craig is by no means a theorist. He is a realist who knows his own mind, and in the exercise of what he believes to be right he has no fear. Indeed, if one quality of the Ulster Scot stands forth above all others, it is his boundless capacity for moral courage, which, by the same token, reduces his ability to compromise, thereby straining his relations with other peoples.

A week later Lord Londonderry kindly supplied me with a card to the Upper House. It is a miniature House of Lords, the Speaker, at that time Lord Dufferin, resplendent in wig and gown. Here Lord Londonderry reigns supreme. Opinions of other members in conflict with his, at a tap from him, of their own accord fall away like ninepins.

But there is nothing aggressive or domineering about Lord Londonderry, still young and immensely popular with his associates. In appearance he is essentially an aristocrat of the old school; slight exaggerations of dress happily set off by a boyish and easy good-humour. I admired him for throwing himself so actively into the affairs of Ulster; yet he was the only Irishman I had so far met who was so little a product of his own country. He had a sense of other people, a poise and detachment, infused, no doubt, by the years he had spent at an English Public School.

Lord Londonderry was unable to grasp exactly what the Republicans were struggling for. Such an agitation was foreign to him, a foolish waste of effort. His was not the nature to be swept away by a gust of passion to the pinnacle of great achievement. Accustomed to have things his own way, he could not visualize the conflicting emotions which sway natures less finely tempered and lives less fortunately regulated. Still, he could scarcely be more balanced and moderate. As for Lady Londonderry, her charm and humble-mindedness are a by-word in more than one Irish household.

So far as Ulster is concerned, Lord Londonderry is unique. Neither Lord Dufferin nor Lord Masserene, prominent members of the Upper House, possessed qualities which differentiated them from the business men carrying on the functions of the Lower House. They were cut on the same pattern, with the same general characteristics.

There were no other visitors to the Upper House that day. For some reason the air seemed lighter here, less oppressive with self-righteousness. The faces, with the exception of Lord Dufferin, who has the Blackwood melancholy, were not quite so dolorous, grave perhaps, yet they had a capacity for cheerfulness and markedly less self-consciousness. Thrice amazing that so measured a territory as Ireland should have acquired so disproportionate a position in men's minds, that the Government of but a small corner can command this wealth of intellect and ability!

The same afternoon I met a Captain Dixon, who, although he was not a member of Ulster's Cabinet, was a Member of Parliament for Great Britain. He was one of the Government group in Belfast, and was obviously brimming over with ability of a rather different sort from what one is accustomed to find in Ulster. In his mental reactions, too, he belonged more to the South than to the North. Although inaccurate over details, he was one of the few prominent men in Belfast alive to the danger widespread over the whole country. He believed that Ireland was reverting to barbarism; that before long the Southern Counties would break off, set up independent Republics, and carry on the guerrilla warfare to which their ancestors had been accustomed centuries before. Of the integrity of the Southern Irishman he professed himself profoundly distrustful, nor did he restrain his antagonism toward the British statesmen who had brought about the Irish settlement. This Captain

Dixon was a charming man, his mind clever and as sharp as a razor edge.

With this one possible exception, the Northern Government and those close to them lived at this time in apparent ignorance of what was really taking place in the South. The Republicans and the Free Staters were to them still as synonymous as they had been a bare six months before.

The feeling between these two sections of Irish, bred in the bone, embedded in the marrow, is too intense, their points of view too widely divergent, ever, it would seem, to be bridged. "Ever" is, of course, a long word, and I have shown that General Smuts was among those who thought that the two Parliaments would ultimately unite under one flag. But I could not banish from my mind the consciousness that behind the agitation in the South was something sinister, before which the picture of a united Ireland faded completely. So believing, it was beyond my power to visualize these two entities as one nation, indivisible.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREEN BAND

A TALE of the North, "The Belfast Child," from Sir William Orpen's *Stories of Old Ireland*, runs thus:

"It is of two Belfast women talking together. One is expressing her sorrow for the other, as she had just lost her little son, aged six years. The bereaved mother replied, 'Aye, but it was a beautiful death, a beautiful death. There he was, lying in his wee cot, and he stretched out his two arms to me and said, "Mither, bring me me wee sash." I brought him his wee sash, and he wrept it round his wee body, then said he, "Mither, bring me me wee drum." I brought him his wee drum, and he gave a couple of wee knocks on the wee drum, then he turned his face to the wall and said, "To hell with the Pope," and the good Lord took him to Himself. Aye, it was a beautiful death.'"

The Middle of the Road in Ireland; would it be possible to travel? . . .

At the suggestion of a high official, I presented myself at his office, one rainy morning about noon. It was by no means simple to gain access to these Government buildings. One must have a pass signed by the official upon whom one was calling, a

natural precautionary measure occasioned by the period of strife through which the city had passed.

He unfolded a large map of Belfast on which the Sinn Fein districts were marked by a green band splitting the city into two sections. This map showed how the weak spots had been carefully utilized, and removed any doubt that chance had placed Sinn Fein in so strategic a position.

Imagine the situation. A city occupying a wide area is divided directly in half by rows of streets running parallel, in which the ranks upon ranks of small houses are occupied by poor families belonging to the Roman Catholic faith. The small houses are so honeycombed that anyone entering a door at one end of a street can proceed through the entire row and come out unscathed at the other end. How, under such conditions, is it possible to catch men on the run? The inhabitants are a close corporation, remember, who would never dare to give one of their number away. If they should, death would stalk them; nor would the chase be of long duration.

I asked him if there was a definite connexion between the troubles in the North and the anarchy in the South and West. He shrugged his shoulders.

Later I was to see, through other sources, documents found on men who had been captured by the Northern Government, which referred to the sporadic outbreaks of incendiarism which had occurred in different sections of the city during the preceding months. Further, they showed the gunmen in the North to be tools of persons higher up;

persons with headquarters in Dublin, whence had come instructions to the henchmen. They ran as follows :

1. Objective (the location of building or buildings, etc., minutely described).
2. Reasons for disposal.
3. Steps necessary (what must be done before object can be accomplished).
4. Amount of money needed.
5. Cans of petrol needed (number, etc.).
6. Other materials needed (such as firearms, dynamite, etc.).
7. Methods of approach to the building.
8. Number of watchmen or guards, etc., how many of these it would be necessary to dispose of to force an entrance.

There were pages of such questions, opposite to which answers had been meticulously written down. In every case, months of concentrated effort must have been required for the mere accumulation of such information. The extent to which no detail was overlooked is shown by the following list of arms, explosives, ammunition, documents, etc., discovered in an I.R.A. Assembly in July of 1922 :

No.	*Description.*	*Precise spot where found.*
5.	Rifles of various makes. Defective ..	Underneath Stairs at back of Hall.
1.	Rook Rifle ·22. In working order ..	Ditto.
1.	·122 Rifle Barrel	Ditto.
1.	Very light Pistol	Ditto.

No.	*Description.*	*Precise spot where found.*
55.	·2981 Old Colt Revolver. Defective	Underneath Stairs at back of Hall.
1.	Mark 6 Webley. In good order. No. 142040	Ditto.
4.	Sword Bayonets. Old pattern ..	Ditto.
2.	Rifle Grenades	Ditto.
24.	Mills Bomb	Ditto.
25.	Mills Bomb Detonators	Ditto.
25.	Egg Bombs (24 detonated)	Ditto.
11.	Galbraith Signal Lights	Ditto.
3.	Rockets	Ditto.
2.	Thirteen-pounder Shells	Ditto.
1.	Large Bomb. Unknown description	Ditto.
1.	Mine Exploder	Ditto.
2.	Tins of Gunpowder, about 1 lb. ..	Ditto.
360.	Rounds of ·303 Ammunition.. ..	Ditto.
236.	Rounds of ·455 Revolver Ammunition	Ditto.
351.	Rounds of Morris Tube Ammunition	Ditto.
48.	Rounds of ·380 Long.	Ditto.
43.	Rounds of ·32 Ammunition	Ditto.
18.	Rounds of Elephant Cartridges ..	Ditto.
15.	Rounds of ·32 Ammunition. Rim fire	Ditto.
13.	Twelve Bore Cartridges	Ditto.
125.	Small Boxes of Shot Gun-pellets ..	Ditto.
8.	Rounds of German Revolver Ammunition	Ditto.
7.	Rounds of French Ammunition ..	Ditto.
2.	Rounds of Blank ·303	Ditto.
2.	Dummy Cartridges ·303	Ditto.
1.	Round ·360 Ammunition	Ditto.
3.	Rounds of ·380 Ammunition. Short	Ditto.
2.	Cartridges for Firing Grenades ..	Ditto.
1.	Bandolier. Military	Ditto.
2.	Knuckle-dusters	Ditto.
3.	Field Dressings	Ditto.
1.	Tourniquet	Ditto.

No.	*Description.*	*Precise spot where found.*
3.	R.I.C. Uniform Caps	Underneath Stairs at back of Hall.
1.	R.I.C. Belt	Ditto.
1.	R.I.C. Cape	Ditto.
1.	R.I.C. Trousers	Ditto.
1.	R.I.C. Waterproof Coat	Ditto.
1.	R.I.A. Tunic	Ditto.
2.	Military Officers' Tunics	Ditto.
1.	Basket of Canisters, for making bombs	Ditto.
1.	Bundle of I.R.A. Mobilization Papers	Ditto.
Large Quantity of I.R.A. Literature. Important..		Ditto.
Several Bottles Paraffin for Incendiary Work		Ditto.
Several Parcels of Paper Saturated with Paraffin		Ditto.

.....*Captn. & D.I.*
O.C. 18 *Platoon R.U.S.C.*

It was an uncanny piece of luck which put these papers into my hands, because they offered further proof of the intricacy of the web which had for so long been entwining itself over the face of Ireland.

A Major in the British Army and his wife, staying in the same hotel as myself, threw further light upon these matters. He belonged to an Irish family whose name is well known, but like the officer on the Irish Mail who had enlivened my first journey to Ireland, he would a thousand times rather have been back in war-time France than living in the muddle of post-war Ireland. He was a tall, fine-looking man in his thirties—a credit to a line famous for its fighting qualities.

From nine o'clock in the evening till dawn the next day he and his men toured the city, going wherever report had it that trouble was brewing. He blamed the Ulster Police for a habit they had of wiping off old scores against their enemies under the cloak of "duty." This was a reflection of the spirit of revenge harboured between Irish families for generations—"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—a little resembling the feuds among the Kentucky mountaineers.

One morning the Major returned haggard and worn from his rounds. The previous night he had been called upon to search a house in the Sinn Fein section of the city, occupied by an old woman long under suspicion. As they entered, she fell upon her knees imploring the Major not to go inside a room to the left of the doorway. He persisted, and found a dead man stretched out on a couch in a corner. The old lady explained the body had been left that morning, and would be called for that night....

"The trouble really began," continued the Major, with the 1920 Act, which infuriated Sinn Fein all over Ireland and inspired the murder in Cork of a Colonel Smyth, a County Down man.

"These outrages are, in reality, the working of cause and effect. During the war, the proportion of Irishmen who enlisted in the British Army was greater in the North than in the South. Jobs emptied by enlistment were refilled by Irishmen who had poured into the Six Counties from the South and West. The latter were mainly Catholic,

who, for their several reasons, permitted themselves, during the interim of the war, to be swept into the maelstrom of Sinn Fein, and Sinn Fein was by no means reluctant to seize this opportunity of winning Ulster for its own. Yet, while many thousand men were with the Colours, there were still plenty of staunch Protestants left who bitterly resented what they called a subtle effort to 'coerce' Ulster. Eventually, the feeling crystallized itself into religious bigotry, centring on the one hand against Catholics, who were one and all branded 'Sinn Fein Papists,' and on the other against die-hard Protestants." He stopped to rekindle his pipe.

"The war ends. The employers, to make way for the returned soldiers, dismiss some of the usurpers. A religious vendetta immediately breaks out between the two groups, the product of bitter feeling which, as it smouldered, had been aggravated tenfold by trained agitators. Employers were loudly accused of dismissing the men because they belonged to the Catholic faith. The Catholics, aroused to a white heat of resentment, joined the I.R.A. in droves, and were rewarded well for their services. Now it was that the dangerous nature of Sinn Fein made itself felt.

"From this time onward," continued the Major, "the I.R.A. became very active. For the purpose of operations in Northern Ireland, the nine counties which originally formed the Province of Ulster were treated by the I.R.A. as a single unit operating in six divisions. The largest of these units contained 83 officers and 3,600 other ranks; the smallest

66 officers and 500 other ranks. The first Northern Division operated in Donegal and the westerly portion of Londonderry; the second Northern Division was responsible for east Londonderry and north Tyrone; the third Northern Division covered Belfast itself, Antrim, and the northern and eastern districts of County Down; the fourth Northern Division functioned in Armagh and the western part of County Down; the fifth Northern Division were busy in Monaghan and South Tyrone. In addition there was the Midland Division, one brigade of which operated in the southern part of Fermanagh and North Cavan; also the third Western Division, a brigade of which was detailed for South Donegal and West Cavan.

"How were operations conducted? Largely by small flying squads, who, after a series of outrages in particular districts, disappeared into another part of the country, where they repeated their performance. Meanwhile, the activities in the South further inflamed the people in the North. The murder of the fourteen British officers" (whom I remembered Mrs. Childers had declared to be "spies" and therefore rightly removed) "was met with blazing anger in the North. One of these men, incidentally, was a friend of mine. He had lost both his legs in the war, and was shot in bed, his wooden legs hanging on a peg behind the door.

"By July of '21 there was more trouble than ever, sniping, bombing, etc., and in November serious rioting occurred, resulting in attacks on trains full of workmen going to the shipyards.

"Meantime, the Headquarters Staff of the I.R.A. maintained a specially selected squad of gunmen, who roved the country north and south and seemed fashioned by nature with an instinct for destruction.

"The I.R.A., acting on orders from Dublin, continued to make the task of governing virtually impossible, by honeycombing the entire framework of government with intrigue. Shooting in the streets, bomb-throwing and arson continued until, in February, organized raids took place, the raiders coming from Monaghan into Tyrone and Fermanagh. They seized well-to-do loyalists, and carried them off as hostages, nor for a long time could their release be secured.

"Organized orgies of crime during prolonged periods are not only revolting, but produce an atmosphere of stealth you must notice everywhere. After all, it is not like fighting an army in the open. The I.R.A. is a secret organization, a body of men wearing mufti, who fight from behind hedges, and whose personnel cannot be distinguished from casual civilians. In this, they have the supreme advantage. There is something positively uncivilized in such methods. France was bad enough—"

He got up with a shrug of his great shoulders.

Ireland was indeed reaping the seeds of her own disenchantment.

Far from frightening the Ulsterman, intimidation had apparently only emphasized his sullen, dogged

qualities, and while he grew suspicious even of his friends, his *morale* continued unbroken.

The mill-owners with whom I talked complained of a grave decline in output since the beginning of strife. For in 1920, the Sinn Fein organization in Dublin had declared a strict boycott against Belfast traders who carried on large businesses all over Ireland. Every means at the disposal of the I.R.A. was used to enforce this boycott; railway stations were raided, trains held up, and goods from Belfast destroyed.

Even now their people were still potted at, on their way to and from the factories.

I watched doles being distributed to a few of the victims by a Labour Member of the Ulster House of Commons, who, by the way, had taken pains to stuff his pockets full of revolvers. Seemingly it was unwise, these days, to play courtier to chance. One lad of twelve suffered a gunshot wound in the eye; a young woman's right arm had been shattered by bullets. Many of the women who had been widowed held a whimpering youngster in their arms.

Soldiers were posted in pairs on street corners all over the city, their tin hats on at an angle, looking about them with the easy and amused tolerance characteristic of any British Tommy. Clearly they considered the whole situation, Irishmen fighting Irishmen, nothing but "'um-bug"—"What in 'ell is it h'all abaht?" one of them remarked to me.

The Police toured the city in lorries covered with

wire netting as a guard against bombs, their rifles and bayonets fixed. One day, a woman coming out of a shop which I was passing was deliberately aimed at and killed—by whom? No one knew or would ever know, nor would they tell if they did know. The indifference of the pedestrians near was extraordinary. They knew better than to meddle. As it turned out, this woman had been, until recently, a strong adherent of Sinn Fein. But she had had a change of heart. So she was shadowed until she could be conveniently disposed of.

The Northern Government, pursuing the policy of an iron hand, the only alternative to their own extermination, held a round-up of Sinn Feiners in the summer of 1922. Immediately they were faced with the problem of housing their captives, until a wise head among them conceived the unique idea of purchasing one of the old wooden ships built during the war by the American Government, fitting it up as a prison ship, and anchoring it at the mouth of Belfast Lough.

To this prison ship I was readily permitted access. With the keenest interest, I set forth early one morning to meet the tug which daily carried out supplies, letters and a Doctor. It was a lovely day and windy, the water just ruffled with foam.

There were well over two hundred men on board, under guard of course, with the body of the ship entirely given over to their use. Certainly I saw nothing to justify the stories of filthy conditions or of neglect suffered by the prisoners themselves. On the contrary, the quarters were clean and airy.

A Scotsman had been brought over to take charge of this precarious venture. There was little nonsense about him, and I accused him in my own mind of being perfectly fair and just in the administration of his duty. Although the bridge was fitted up with a machine-gun and the men in charge with firearms, it would have seemed a simple matter to run boats alongside on any dark night. Together we stood for some time on the bridge, looking down on that medley group of humanity; professors, post-office clerks, civil servants, business men, clergymen, school teachers, thugs and cut-throats; wondering by what channels each had been drawn into the whirlpool of Sinn Fein. During lunch, served in the Governor's cabin, again I inferred from things dropped here and there—had I not already discovered that knowledge is written between the lines in Ireland—that a canny eye had been cocked in my direction since my arrival in Belfast! I shrugged my shoulders; if it amused them. . . .

In the afternoon, the Governor accompanied me back to Belfast. I was impressed by the manner in which he approached Irish difficulties, and his Scottish impatience with the inconsistencies of the Irish temperament. Before we parted he offered me a card to a friend of his holding high office in Glasgow, a card which led me eventually—but that comes later in my story.

CHAPTER XVII

TYNAN ABBEY

Tynan Abbey in County Armagh, my next objective, was the seat of the Irish family of Stronge, the head of which was Sir James, the fifth baronet.

The sun shone gallantly the day of my arrival, and the sky had that clear brilliance which is the peculiar accompaniment of fine weather in Ireland and Scotland. I was met at the station by an old family retainer—Patrick, formerly the coachman, who now directed the energies of a modest Ford. A quaint figure he presented, as he came shambling towards me to relieve me of my luggage; head inclined to one side, and eyes lighted with a friendly, but reserved, curiosity. There followed a drive through narrow roads, bordered on either side by thorned hedges, whose banks, I fancied, would in spring-time be a carpet of primroses and violets. Over the small hills and into the valleys we went, the meadows and distant slopes presenting themselves in endless vistas; a quick turn, and we had passed the gates of Tynan and were skimming through a park of amazing beauty.

A first glimpse of the Abbey was enchanting. Although it was not an old house as age is judged in Ireland, having taken the place of its predecessor burned to the ground some hundred years before,

it had all the charm of antiquity. A soft brown pile, it sat dominating this rolling expanse of park, shadowed loftily by the graceful branches of ancient elm-trees, and half smothered by sturdy tendrils of ivy creeping diligently over its rough surfaces.

On the front steps sat a young girl, her bright face in keeping with the gay morning. She proved to be a daughter of the house, Joy, and was peacefully brushing and combing, each in turn, the half-dozen dogs which lay or romped about her: these proved to be the vanguard of a vast army of dogs and puppies living within the hospitable precincts of Tynan Abbey.

Tynan's extending wings, sprawling in several directions, allowed for a spacious interior about which there was a faint hint of the ecclesiastic. The hall, with its massive carved oak staircase, ran up two storeys, and was bordered on the left by a gallery from one side of which Stronge ancestors gazed imperturbably down: on the main floor, it ran down the centre of the house towards the dining-room at the back, the other rooms spreading comfortably on either side. Of them all, the study held the greatest appeal. Through its long glass windows, swinging outward on a level with the terrace, whose broad steps led to a sunken rose garden, one's glance, following a wide expanse of park, lighted upon a small pond sparkling magically in the sunshine, like a jewel sunk in the midst of the cushiony turf. It was an enchanting view, and held the very spirit of poetry. The trees had been so jealously nursed by Sir James

and his predecessors, that only the most beautiful now remained. These had been allowed to grow unhampered, to spread their branches where and how Nature should direct. The walls of this retreat, for so it seemed, were lined from ceiling to floor with books. Even the door had been so cleverly concealed by shelves of volumes, that, were it closed, the only visible means of exit was through the long glass windows opening onto the terrace. Logs crackled on the broad hearth—Ireland is rather cold at this season—adding not warmth alone but a sense of peace, of leisure. The room, and the view beyond, blending so harmoniously, completed one's consciousness of a high civilization, to the achievement of which had gone years of fruitful living.

The meeting with the Stronges was my first encounter with Irish gentry living upon their land, between whom there is a family likeness all over Ireland. In Belfast one meets the essence of what is Ulster, just as in New York one meets the essence of what is the United States, although neither of these cities exactly resembles the outlying districts of the country each represents. Away from Belfast, in other parts of Ulster, one finds the same qualities, characteristics, trends of thought, or whatever one chooses to call them, which alienate the North and South so profoundly; but they have become less concentrated, more diffuse. So it happens that Belfast and the country districts of the Six Counties are as different from one another as two worlds. Yet, while on the surface the waters may be more

smooth, they run none the less deep for that. In the country, the new life and the old have gradually become fused one with another.

As for the landowners, in their own districts they are little monarchs ; so had I heard, so indeed I found.

In Sir James Stronge, a sense of responsibility, as natural to him as breathing, was combined with a delicate whimsicality towards his countrymen of all creeds. This was the fortunate outcome of his subtle contact with places and peoples far distant from Ireland, made partly through his brother, Sir Francis Stronge, for forty years in the Diplomatic Service of His Majesty's Government. At any rate, he remained entirely unperturbed by the threats tossed from pillar to post round about him. In spirit, he was part of the land on which he had spent his life and his fathers before him ; with the people to whose interests he had from birth been dedicated ; he was one of them. This devotion had its roots deep in the past, and was too shy a thing to talk about. It was the current by which generation kept in touch with generation. And what was most remarkable in Sir James, was his crackling sense of fun, which survived all strain and cropped forth at the least expected of moments.

Lady Stronge, a charming and still beautiful woman, had also been trained in this old school, and represented a type denied our modern world of futile rush and frantic hurry. Her whole nature was steeped in the idea of service. I remember her chiefly for her intense interest in the lives of

the tenants, for her concern in their sorrows, her pleasure in their joys. Their day, with all the little trivial incidents which made its total, was her day also. Premature deafness was a great trial to her: as she expressed it, "the effort to hear wearies me." Yet she was to be found in the dining-room by eight o'clock of a morning, conducting prayers for the household staff.

The Stronges represented the most constructive side of Irish life that I had yet seen. They and their kind stood impregnable against the buffetings of the storm raging about them, and, by their refusal to be harried, presented Ireland's sole hope for the future. Fortunately for Tynan, it had been made the headquarters of a contingent of Special Police. That, however, did not permit the Stronges to venture further than Armagh, without risking at least their motor, maybe their lives. And they carried on exactly as if conditions were normal. Had there been a trace of self-consciousness in their actions, their stoicism would have lost its potency. Actually, such folk were the pivot on which Ireland's fate was ultimately to turn. If Irish gentry as a whole had resembled them, and had not divorced themselves from their estates and tenants, in other words become "absentee Landlords," Sinn Fein would never have flourished as it had. Further South were others like them to whom the danger was even greater, who stuck valiantly to their job—the job of living an everyday life. And one had only to hear of the calamities which had overtaken these folk since the I.R.A. had been actively operating,

to understand how tortuous life had become, and how much easier it would have been to take refuge outside Ireland.

In all these Loyalists there was a real devotion to and admiration for British institutions, of which they had given proof when they sent their sons to the war. During those four years casualties riddled their ranks. The Stronges had lost their only son and heir, a blow from which I suspect neither the father nor the mother, reticent as they were concerning it, will recover.

Some miles from the Stronges' was the home of Sir John Leslie, whose wife was a sister of the late Lady Randolph Churchill, and whose son is Shane Leslie, the writer. Casually making a tour of his grounds one day, Sir John discovered that a machine-gun had been cleverly concealed in an outlying section of the estate, where, unbeknown to him, the I.R.A. was carrying on activities. The incident had an element of humour, and the best and only thing to do was to ignore it. The Stronges and Leslies were close friends, accustomed in the old days to see much of one another. On the last occasion when Lady Stronge had ridden over to see Lady Leslie, who suffered from weakness of the heart, she was stopped mid-way by a well-wisher, and advised that if she proceeded farther her motor would be taken from her. This incident was further illustrative of the difficulty encountered in getting about these country districts, and of the complete isolation into which the inhabitants were forced.

I suppose, too, that at this period the whole of Ireland was more or less functioning without funds, simply because the banks dared not keep money on hand lest it be rudely commandeered. One lady in Limerick had for months been without the means of exchange. As for letters, a lapse of three weeks for their delivery between one part of the country and the other, was by no means unusual.

So it came about that the Loyalists, referred to so often with contempt, supposed that the world had turned its back on them.

Nor were the clergy spared. The clergyman of one of the several parishes in Tynan village, awoke one morning to find his cattle stolen and his stable destroyed. His living was meagre enough, so meagre that this outrage increased his burden tenfold, and shadowed him with the uncertainty of a more terrible penalty. A comfortable mode of living allays the throbbing of jagged nerves, but when bodily privation goes hand in hand with fear and worry for the future, it is usually more than the human mechanism can bear. The shy, nervous little man sitting on the edge of his chair in the Stronge library during one of his hurried calls, murmuring in his troubled way about the state of Ireland, was an example of the mysterious fusion in one individual of small things with great. In his concern for his parishioners, he gave not a thought to himself, confronted even as he was with the bare elemental facts of existence. Sir James's cheerfulness shone brightly against the intensity of

the little man's concern. It was this very ability to bring his wayward humour to bear on Ireland's faults and foibles, which made Sir James so human and beloved a figure. He always maintained that Ireland's chief grievance was towards Fate for having given her a smaller island than she had given England.

This grudge she regarded as her special birthright.

Mention of the clergy brings me to that quaint event, a rural Sunday in Ireland. I remember we walked to church, following a winding path across the park, then over an old wooden stile, and on through rich and fertile meadows. The landscape, with its quietly grazing cattle, seemed instinct with the day. This same walk had been taken leisurely across these same meadows for generations, by just such folk as ourselves. The Sunday lull brought one the sensation of dropping back, and again one had the distinct consciousness of the subtle workings of a high civilization. As I remember, we entered by a side-door. I recall the modest, shy bearing of Lady Stronge as she crossed the aisle past the Altar, in front of the tenants, her head bent to hide the blush gradually mounting to the roots of her hair. A similar self-consciousness seemed to possess Sir James as he mumbled his way through the Lessons. I can see, too, the little clergyman, thin and spare in his pulpit, like a bird with all the feathers stripped off. But his earnestness won the day. Then the walk home, after stopping for a few moments' chat at the home of

the village Doctor, a round, hearty man. It was a tranquil occasion, and tranquil is my memory of it.

Those servants of a younger age who demand a bath-tub as the natural accompaniment of a bedroom, would have been amazed to see the ease with which this palatial mansion functioned without one, and without electricity or gas. A "hat" with great shining cans of hot water, was placed in one's room with the tea first thing in the morning. This quaint custom was all part of the setting, belonged with the ancient beauty of the park, with the courtyard too, which trailed out for some distance behind the house. One passed this last on the way to the walled-in garden a stone's throw off.

As for the garden, completely enclosed by a high wall, it was a very breeding-ground of beauty. A portion of it was filled with strawberry beds, and who is there who does not delight in wandering at random over a strawberry patch? They complained that this was a bad year for strawberries, but I was little accustomed to berries so large or sweetly flavoured. Against the old brick of the wall climbed the cherry and plum trees, while flowers of every colour and variety spread triumphantly over the wide, generous beds. The damp, far from destroying the seeds, but added to the sweetness and luxuriance of the blooms.

In the day-time, amid such a wealth of beauty, the state of Ireland receded to the background of one's mind. Night, however, was made hideous by the uncertainties which lurked in the gloom

of the thick hedgerows. Ease and peace of mind passed out with beauty into the darkness. The Special Police, who during the day patrolled the grounds, dared not linger on the flat ground about the house during the lonely hours bridging the gap between dusk and dawn, but established themselves in a tower over the front entrance, from which they had a safer look-out. Danger comes on foot in Ireland, from behind tree-trunks and sheltering shrubbery. Night after night the silences were broken by the echo of motors racing along the country roads, and the patter of gun-fire. The effect was eerie, a lure to the least imaginative mind, which would sooner or later wear down the calmest temperament.

CHAPTER XVIII

". . . for THE LOVE OF GOD"

W. B. YEATS, in his *The Celtic Twilight*, quotes a story told him by a Mayo woman: " 'I knew a servant girl who hung herself for the love of God. She was lonely for the priest and her Society,' the religious Society she belonged to, 'and hung herself to the banisters with a scarf. She was no sooner dead than she became white as a lily, and if it had been murder or suicide she would have become black as black. They gave her Christian burial, and the Priest said she was no sooner dead than she was with the Lord. So nothing matters that you do for the love of God.' "

This tale always recurred to me whenever I bumped, head foremost, against the barbed wire of religious difference separating Northern and Southern Ireland.

A member of a Protestant Church in a certain village, wished to present her parish with a clock to be set in the church tower. After due consideration, the congregation refused the gift because the time could be read by their Catholic neighbours as they ascended the hill into the village. That was the real reason, although the ostensible excuse was the inability of the Parish to support the

clock. The lady, nothing daunted, offered to contribute a sum to meet the expenses incurred by the installation of the clock, and to endow its upkeep. After discussion and warm feeling, the clock was installed. But it was never enjoyed because the Catholic neighbours were equally benefited.

" So nothing matters that you do for love of God." —One fine Sunday afternoon, I was offered concrete examples of how this philosophy was strangling the minds of certain sections of the people. Tools they were, honestly and fervently inspired with the conviction that their actions were directed by " love of God." Their religion gave them the right to mark for others the way of Calvary.

Six miles from Tynan, not perhaps as the crow flies, but by road, lay the tiny homestead of a Protestant family. There were two children, a boy and a girl. In July of 1922 the son was riding leisurely along a lane near the Border on his bicycle, unconcerned enough, whistling as was his wont. Behind the hedge there was a barely perceptible twitching of twigs; the aim was sure at this range, for the next moment his whistle trailed off, as he tumbled in a heap by the road-side. . . . As we entered the little cottage that Sunday afternoon, we found the father and mother sitting huddled over the fire. They were dressed in their Sabbath clothes, quiet, sunk in memories. They looked up and nodded unsmilingly, listened patiently as the young daughter explained our errand, and turning back to the fire, resumed their silence. We were,

and felt, intruders. They had no wish to make a spectacle of their grief.

Half-way down the road was a larger farm, also belonging to a Protestant farmer. Likewise in July of '22, a son, not an only son fortunately, was shot down in a similar manner; but the effect on the father was utterly different. He made for his gun, and started off straightway to kill the first Catholic neighbour he could encounter. The men who had brought his son back controlled him with difficulty. For nearly a week afterward, the old man was kept under rigid guard. He was a tragic figure, wild-eyed, garrulous, his hair sticking out in every direction, his whole figure alive and bristling with the hatred he felt towards a religion which could deprive him of what meant most to him on earth. Revenge might yet have its way if the opportunity should come. Violence, when it starts, is like a fire in a forest: deep ditches have to be dug to prevent the spread.

We returned to Tynan Abbey late in the afternoon. I contrasted the peaceful-looking country through which we drove, with the storm-racked minds which that afternoon had enhanced my gallery of impressions. What a paradox that terror should lurk in so lovely a country! A landscape as sweet as it was gentle opened and reopened before us as we sped over the miles, a medley of alluring meadows sloping upwards to quiet hills, none of them too high, yet high enough to break the even line of horizon, and now tinged delicately with red, reflections thrown out from the

last rays of the sun sinking slowly and rebelliously to its rest.

Was it mere chance that bade me, as we passed a lonely church, turn for a second glance at the flag floating lazily from the tower? Just in the centre where the crosses met, the ancient crosses of St. George, St. Andrew and St. Patrick, a hand spread out, the fingers widely separated, blood-red as the dying sun.

"The Red Hand of Ulster," remarked Major Finnerty, our escort, catching my glance.

It was a relief to get back to Tynan. The sight of the Red Hand had brought a creepy, haunting feeling like coming upon a snake unexpectedly in short grass. However, sitting before the friendly warmth of the library fire, and listening to the *badinage* tossed lightly from one guest to another, the impression gradually faded.

Sir Francis Stronge and his wife were also guests at Tynan. No ripple of concern passed through Sir Francis's cool brain, or if it did he gave no outward sign. He had seen a show like this before, when he was attached to the British Ministry in Mexico. I listened with relish to the comments, cryptic, restrained, which passed between him and Sir James.

"L'histoire, comme une idiote, mécaniquement se répète," he remarked in his impersonal way.

Such was the reaction to be expected from the trained observer of peoples, who is too conscious of human frailties to be led away into the uncharted seas of raucous idealism.

Lady Stronge, soft-spoken, gracious, belonged to one of the old county families of the South. On this evening, when the rest had gone off to bed, she and Joy sat on with me watching the dying embers. Temperamentally, Lady Stronge was Southern Irish to the core. The peasants on her father's estate she described as kind, good people, the seers of spirits in enchanted woods, but illiterate, and without a standard of living ; in short, the pure embodiment of uncontrolled, undirected emotionalism. Give-and-take between landlord and tenant was of advantage in the old days, but now, without educational opportunity, without a guiding hand, in places, particularly Galway and other western districts, civilization in its simplest forms has not penetrated. The people were wild, untamed creatures, among whom the shrewd propagandist has reaped a rich harvest. So much for the effect of " absentee " ownership.

No land would seem less hampered by a greed for gain than these country districts of Ireland. Money was seldom mentioned among the gentry, in fact they seemed rather to glory in their poverty, surrounded by the kind of culture mere money cannot purchase.

In the midst of our ruminations, Joy shivered a little, and remarked that " she wondered if there was anybody listening at the windows."

Quiet as mice, we lit our candles and stole up to bed, to indulge in—

> " The dim wisdoms, old and deep,
> That God gives unto men in sleep."

For long, however, before oblivion claimed me, the Blood-red Hand floated up and down the pages of the French novel I tried valiantly to read.

The next day, less bright and sunny, with Major Finnerty, Joy and I started off early on a second round of inspection. I say early, for this time we were bound farther afield.

Our first stop was at " the Morgan farm," belonging to the family of Morgan, nice, quiet, highly respected Catholic people. The place was to be taken over that day as a new headquarters for the Police of the district. It was a hard job to eject the Morgans, even temporarily, from their comfortable premises; but the outrages hereabouts were so numerous, and of so horrible a nature, that at least a measure of control was demanded. Near-by rested another Catholic farm inhabited by two old men. Their filth was abject, nor have I ever come in contact with human beings who enjoyed so few of the common decencies of life. Rags and straw, strewn on the attic floor, served as beds, while on their backs hung the remnants of what had once been clothes. Hens and pigs moved freely in the dwelling, and sanitation in its crudest form was absent. Yet chests of drawers, window-ledges and iron pots were stuffed with Republican literature, packed away in piles.

We motored to a third farm of similar quality. Here lived a mother with her two unmarried daughters, all three barefoot. The mother was sprightly, her bright aggressive spirit in keeping

with her reddish hair. Her daughters, their faces and bodies stained with dirt, hung back a bit. Matted though their hair was, it glinted gloriously in the sunlight. They wore loose pink blouses gaping with tears, while sacking tied with string hung about their waists.

Clearly, the sympathies of all these families were Republican. In this last household the sons had fled over the Border during the round-up of Sinn Feiners, and their women-folk carried food and supplies to them in their washing—strange that they should have any—back and forth across the Border. It had been the custom for these boys to dash over the Border into the ranks of the I.R.A., and leave to their mothers and sisters the task of bringing information across to other Republican groups working in the Six Counties. The mother informed me, with much pride, that her nephew was a Public Service Commissioner in New York. She claimed to have other relatives of prominence in the United States.

At noon we picnicked in a lovely, sheltered valley down a side-road, to all appearances peaceful enough; wet, although the rain lifted during our meal. A woman from a cottage near-by brought us a kettle of boiling water for our tea. We chatted and laughed, and for the hundredth time I revelled in the irresponsibility of Irish wit.

The tale ran that in a corner of the Border, not far away, the Free State soldiers had been face to face with the irregular troops of the I.R.A.

Solemnly, following the customary procedure of raising the white flag to the enemy, they assembled in conclave. Their greatest need, each group concluded, was a good night's rest. The same night they combined forces; one lot detailed for guard while the others slept. The next night they repeated the performance, and joined in a good laugh over the prank before they became enemies again.

To so many of them, this fighting was all an adventure, a mad stirring of the blood. What is it in these Irish which delights in the unexpected, and turns life into a tragic frolic?

Joy Stronge was devoted to Sinn Feiner and Orangeman alike. Disdaining fear, she went whither her fancy led, amusing herself with whom she pleased. She mentioned some friends living in the Free State south of Drogheda, whose tennis-court was used by all the country-side. One afternoon they were to have a special party, to which they had invited the few British officers left in the district. Early in the morning, however, the Free State troops arrived unexpectedly, to take over the grounds and entrances. When they heard the hostess mourning her tennis party they assured her they would not interfere. So in the afternoon the guests were welcomed by the new patrol. Later, when the British officers were playing, the Free State Army looked on with a great show of interest and loud applause.

Chapters could be written on the spice of Irish life during this period, whole chronicles of incidents which could happen nowhere else and were

occurring every day and every hour in Erin's own Island. There is a continuity, too, about the country-side. Where, in other lands, burned houses would torture and deface a landscape, here the barren spots mould into their setting. Personality clings to inanimate things.

This last odd circumstance we noticed vividly, as we walked over the scene of the Altnaveigh massacres on the afternoon of this same day. It was in June of 1921, at a place called Altnaveigh, that Sinn Fein temporized so ruthlessly with the devil. It was part of the attempt embarked upon with such determination by the I.R.A. to convince the Ulster mind that, unless Ulster agreed to join the South, the ruin of the Six Counties was inevitable; or so to undermine the Government control that the confidence felt by the people in the agent of law and order would be shattered.

It was on a June night, warm for Ireland; so heavy and overcast, in fact, that the occupants of the first in a row of farmhouses at Altnaveigh had left doors and windows ajar. They were an old couple, a man and a woman, and theirs was a trim little cottage, with its two rooms and a loft above. The roof was thatched and roses climbed at random on either side of the doorway, clinging with diligence to the whitewashed bricks. The old folk were roused by a rough stamping at their door in the early hours of the morning. As they came out they met a group of rough country lads, dressed in their ordinary clothes, but heavily armed, gathering straw into a pile in the front garden. The old

woman immediately recognized one of the boys as the son of a Catholic farmer living a few miles down the road.

Beside herself, she cried out, "Oh, Pat, ye'll not be afther harmin' us?"

Her recognition proved disastrous. Without more ado they were ordered peremptorily from the house, lined up against the wall, and shot.

Much water has since flowed under the bridge, but the little place, partly destroyed, stands as it was left, the front doorway neatly boarded up with clean white planks; meanwhile the flowers and the bushes have blossomed and grown profusely and untrammelled.

The rough country lads having disposed of one job, went on to the next farm, a stone's-throw away. Here lived a farmer, his wife and five children. The farmer, aroused by the firing next door, had pushed his family through a back window into the open fields beyond. He was a large man himself, of generous girth, and only a superhuman effort enabled him to squeeze through the tiny opening. However, the youths, who had been commissioned to do the job properly, found straw and petrol, and by morning the place was a shell. But only the cattle perished. We found the farmer with two of his children restlessly pacing about the ruins.

Farther up the same road there were two other farms, close together. At the first the farmer was away, but his wife was there alone with her baby. On the spur of the moment, she rushed out without

realizing the calamity which had overtaken her. They caught her and refused to allow her to go back and fetch the child. However she defied their threats, it was useless; but while their attention was engaged with the straw and petrol, she managed to elude them and steal away with her baby.

Her next-door neighbours were less fortunate. There were two daughters and a son in this family, all grown up. The boy was twenty-two, an usually fine lad in character and physique, and highly thought of in the neighbourhood. The farm next door was ablaze before they awoke to the nature of their visitors. They just had time to troop out in their night-clothes. As they did so they were lined up, the men on one side of the road, the women on the other. The men were then ordered to march on up the winding road out of the way of their womenfolk. The son, as he turned to comply, stopped for a moment to reassure his mother, but as he did so he was shot dead at her feet. The mother, shaken to her depths by the grief of that night, had since died, so that we only saw the father and the two daughters who had lived on in a shed which they had built against the ruined wall of their cottage. Although the tragedy was a year old, their grief and depression were as great as if it had happened but the night before.

And still the raiders had sufficient time and energy to carry on to a fifth cottage some distance farther, where the family consisted of the farmer, his wife and two grown-up sons. The place was set ablaze like the others, and the inmates ordered to

a barn adjoining. One of the attackers told off to guard the mother suggested that she look through the doorway, but instead she turned towards the interior just in time to see her husband and her sons fall dead.

I dimly remembered seeing press notices of the Altnaveigh massacres. At the time they had seemed far away, and I had dismissed them, thinking that they were highly exaggerated effusions of the Press. Now, however, I knew otherwise.

CHAPTER XIX

MESHES OF A WEB

Leaving Altnaveigh behind us, we motored to Jones Barracks, on the edge of the Free State. As a matter of fact, Jones Barracks occupied one corner of a triangle, so dangerously placed that the Police, who until recently had held the stronghold, had had to be replaced by British troops. Since the outbreak of civil war in Dublin and the advent of the Tommies, things had quieted, although, from time to time, sporadic outbursts of firing still occurred.

It was mid-afternoon when we arrived. The two officers in command, having just arisen, were not yet prepared for visitors. Their activities, crammed into the hours from midnight until dawn, changed day into night, so far as rest was concerned. Standing about the little courtyard, the centre of the quaint group of buildings, one fancied oneself back again in France. Snatches of familiar songs, "Take me back to dear old Blighty," "A long, long trail," drifting down to us from the open windows of the Barracks, aggravated the impression. Thomas, passing and repassing, grinned and saluted in the old, cheery, sunny way, full of the same light-heartedness and cheer with which, thousands strong, he had marched through the heavy dust of the French roads, swinging along to the tune of the

old favourites, "If you were the only girl in the world," "Tipperary," "Who's your lady friend?" and a dozen more, whistled or hummed, the finale, a loud negative shouted to the question, "*Are* we down-hearted?" . . .

The young officers, when they appeared, invited us most warmly to share their tea, which had been set out on a long table in a tiny room off their bedroom. This was active service and no mistake; a medley of broken crockery set at random on a table-cloth which had seen weeks of hard use.

Temperamentally, these two young men presented an amazing contrast to the people among whom they were living. Light repartee, tossed from one to another across the table, kept the rest of us bent double with laughter. It was not wit, but humour, seeing life through the spectacles of proportion. To minds such as these, Ireland was an enigma; and between the North and the South, there was little to choose. In fact, the officers shared the bewilderment I had already remarked in those of their men standing at the street corners in Belfast with their tin hats on askew. Gleefully, light-heartedly, they poured out story after story, amazing tales showing the extraordinary character and habits of this people. For the British owe the source of their sunniness, their nonchalance, to the Peter Pan within them: Peter Pan—Youth Eternal—who in some mysterious way has passed the Irishman by.

While officers and Tommies alike got a measure of fun from their job, on the whole they were

thoroughly sick of it, thoroughly plagued with its futility. In their eyes Irishmen were kin to themselves, blood of their blood. Nor did they look forward to a day when there would be peace in Ireland; their confidence in the people, as represented by the Ulster Police and the Free State troops, was too limited. The Police were for ever increasing their difficulties by dashing across the Border into the Free State to get their revenge for this or that outrage against them. For what purpose? "But then, it's all poppy-cock," they finished with a shrug.

From where we sat, we could look through the windows toward the Free State Barracks over the bridge. I say the Free State Barracks, but, as I have already mentioned, in this part of Ireland Sinn Feiner and Free Stater were considered one. The dividing line between North and South lay in the middle of the bridge, so that while half of the village was in the Free State, the other half was in the Six Counties. The post office and the public house were both on the Free State side. But the postmaster was a kindly soul. He had a son fighting with the Irregular Army, but that did not prevent him spending several hours of the twenty-four fetching beer from the public house for the Tommies, who must not venture on the wrong side of the bridge lest a bullet find them. Whatever unusual the young "gentlemen" wished in the way of furniture or china, the postmaster made it his business to supply.

Under cover of the dark, the boys in the Free

State Barracks over the way, slipped across the line to their homes with supplies and information. Since it was the job of the British troops to keep order in their districts, they must needs spend their nights touring the country on the chance of catching a few of the runaways. The schoolmistress, with a brother in the other Army, kept the Republican Intelligence well informed, so perforce her house must be raided each night. But, on the whole, the Republicans hesitated to play tricks on the British, who, from day to day, pursued a more or less uneventful way.

One excitement only distracted them, the weekly use of the one bath-tub of which the district could boast. It belonged to the clergyman, a profound Sinn Feiner, whose friendship was worth cultivating because through him alone lay the royal road to cleanliness.

The contact with these fresh minds brought one back to earth, for the simple reason that even a temporary sojourn in Ireland creates the feeling that one is viewing the world upside down.

Our journey back to Tynan led us through a district, which only a short time before had been the scene of several of the most horrible ambushes in Ireland. It was a dreary valley, wild and uninhabited, except possibly by ghosts. As we motored along, we bent over the sides of the car to look at the niches in the road-side where mines had once been laid.

Riding through this Irish valley, this sense of wild desolation, coupled with an eeriness which must

have had its origin in the supernatural, recalled a tramp I had along Vimy Ridge a few days after the Armistice. The day was wet and Vimy clothed in mist. A more lonely spot could scarcely have been imagined, nor an atmosphere more haunted. The trench-holes and deserted dug-outs had seemed literally alive; but whether with memories or shadows no human eye could distinguish, has ever remained a mystery. So it was with this Irish table-land, bounded by jagged hills. The whole region was the scene of black deeds, even to the straggling village a mile away, inhabited mainly by "Shinners." We passed more than one building—whose owner had aided and abetted the Irregulars in a particularly vindictive way—which had been burned officially by the Ulster Police in a final effort to check violence by violence.

On all these jaunts our method of travelling was quite unique. The Ford in which we rode was preceded by an armoured car, manned by a dozen or more Police officers. Behind that, directly in front of us, was a second Ford, containing an additional body-guard of seven armed men. In our own car the two men in front had two revolvers, while each one of us in the back had been given a pistol. A second thoroughly equipped armoured car brought up the rear, where, in Ireland, actual danger usually lies.

While civil war continued to rage in Dublin the Six Counties had a chance to consolidate and adjust their Police Force. At Tynan I had the

good fortune to meet Captain Ensor, the Commanding Officer of the Police Force in the Armagh district. He told me that the gun-men had already started back to Belfast from Dublin. All trains crossing the Border were now stopped and thoroughly searched before they were allowed to proceed through the Six Counties.

Captain Ensor was an able man, and a type uncommon in the North. He had travelled extensively, and during the war had seen active service on several fronts. His connexion with the Police Force had steeped him in a profound knowledge of the source of Irish unrest, and he unveiled many of the least perceptible deviations in this web of intrigue.

One afternoon we explored together a district, where the absence of excessive violence had permitted the inhabitants to continue their usual occupations uninterrupted.

According to Captain Ensor, the difficulties under which the police of the Six Counties were working were immense. Without conclusive evidence that a man was guilty of a particular outrage they could make no arrests. The plain clothes, and the disguises employed, made the identification of even the best known gun-men nearly impossible.

"Is there definite proof," I enquired, "that these agents or gun-men are acting on instructions from Dublin?"

"Absolute proof," was his answer. "Contrary to the popular idea, especially outside Ireland, the

Bolshie is at the root of the agitation. For years now, secret societies have been on the increase in Ulster, a reflection merely of what has been going on in the South. The members of such organizations are Protestant as well as Catholic. A few have Nationalist aims, but are non-militant in character; but the Independent Workers of the World, which is the largest and most prominent of them all, is intensely militant.

"The Irish Republican Brotherhood, beside being militant, is passionately Nationalistic. It was started in America as far back as 1854; four years later it found its way to Dublin. Passing through many and various vicissitudes, it adopted Sinn Fein as its policy in 1906, and in 1920 went the whole way and merged with the Irish Republican Army. The United Transport Workers, who have long occupied an important position in Belfast, are in reality a branch of the I.W.W. Under the leadership of Larkin, the whole Labour organization of Ireland for years has been working in conjunction with the I.W.W. of America, and collateral organizations on the Continent. Underlying the Labour movement, with its correlated organizations, is strife against Capital.

"But, remember, the members of these organizations are drawn from the whole population of Ireland, Catholic and Protestant alike.

"In the country districts outrages are perpetrated chiefly by local men, but in the cities, such as Belfast, they are done by outsiders imported for the purpose.

"The Easter Rebellion," Captain Ensor continued with a chuckle, "was wonderfully illustrative of Irish psychology. Owing to lack of cohesion among the leaders, the telephone-wires between Cork and Dublin were forgotten,"—he laughed aloud—"just forgotten and left uncut! That was the real explanation for the failure of the Rising."

We were driving through a part of the country more highly cultivated than any I had seen so far. It was the peat-bog district, wonderfully prolific. Small white cottages, square, clean and neat, lined the roadside. Most of the inmates, peat workers, were Protestants, although some few were ardent Catholics and Sinn Feiners.

Farther on, we branched back again to the highroad. We had driven some distance when we turned suddenly into a driveway, unused for so many years that little tufts of grass had grown up in the centre, while the edges were so overgrown that there was barely space for the Ford to crawl along. The house, hidden from the main road, was of pure white stone, the remnant of a stately and dignified mansion reminiscent of Ireland's past; while the grounds, covered with underbrush as they were, still bore signs of centuries of careful attention. The whole place was deserted, or rather tenanted by an "absentee" landlord. Wandering where fancy led, we found ourselves heading for an ash-tree of superb proportions, in what had once been the spaces of a park. Following Captain Ensor's direction, I peered beneath the sloping branches to find a stone monument rising straight and sharp

against the grey bark of the tree. On its lichened surface we could just distinguish the following inscription :

TO THE MEMORY OF A SOLDIER'S FRIEND AND COMPANION,
IN ADVERSITY AND SUCCESS, IN THE PRIVATIONS OF TOILSOME MARCHING,
IN THE ANXIOUS WATCHES OF THE NIGHT, IN THE SHOCK OF MANY BATTLES,
THROUGH THE DAY OF WATERLOO,
THROUGH MANY PAINFUL YEARS WHICH HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THAT CROWNING VICTORY.

CONSTANTIA

DIED NOVEMBER 21, 1835, AGED 33 YEARS.

JOB, CHAPTER 39, VERSES 19, 23, 24 AND 25.

What volumes it spoke for the personality of the individual who raised it, and what a lasting testimony it will be, hidden though it is beneath a sheltering ash, to a race of beasts for which Ireland is renowned, whose peers have been found only among the Arab horses of the desert !

As we drove away, Captain Ensor emphasized the insanity rampant in these Irish villages, not among the poor folk alone, but among the landowners. A bad strain has sometimes directed the destinies of certain families for generations, forcing the scions, after wasteful years of fruitless living, to hand over their places in payment for their debts. Others cut loose early, to become gentlemen adventurers. The mad strain had been increased by constant intermarriage between Irish families of the upper classes, which accounted, too, for the close relationship existing between the Irish Houses,

so few of whom adopt Sinn Fein. Captain Ensor held no brief for the absentee landlord, but believed that if people had held their ground more firmly the problems of this present day would have been averted, in a measure at least.

Threads of my web, heretofore hidden in obscurity, were becoming revealed, until little by little I could see how its meshes were securely fastened over the Six Counties. Knowing so much, I desired to know infinitely more, but how ?

In this mood, I returned to London.

CHAPTER XX

A HOUSE IN CHELSEA

The journey from Tynan to Belfast is not a long one. Again sunshine favoured me. Crossing the city from one station to another, I found it drowsing in an August twilight. It was a Friday night, and the feel of Saturday, the half-holiday, was in the air.

Amply provided with papers, I settled myself in the train some moments before it was due to leave. There were few travellers, and the station was quiet, solitary, as the seconds ticked away. The train was pulling out or very nearly, when a young woman, accompanied by a friend, appeared suddenly in the doorway of my compartment. There was a quick exchange of pleasantries, a hurried embrace, interrupted by the sharp whistle signalling departure, and we were off. We rode for several moments in silence, when the stranger, in a bright way she had, turned and enquired the time. Amused, I obliged her. From that we drifted into a desultory conversation. She was, I reflected, educated as well as attractive : as they say in England, " well turned out."

It is not a long journey to Larne from Belfast, and when we arrived the twilight was still bright

and clear, laying its pale glow over land and water. The first few moments on board were occupied in settling my bags on an inconspicuous settee, but I was rejoined by my train companion as soon as I began pacing the decks. She made a few friendly remarks, from which our conversation progressed with ease as we tramped up and down the smooth planks. Her father, an army man, held the rank of General in the war. During a long and distinguished service, he had brought his daughter in contact with many remarkable events. On her own account she had travelled widely, had, in fact, been at the Washington Conference only the previous autumn, although in what capacity I was at a loss to discover.

Several times we passed and repassed a young man of sallow complexion and long prominent features, tucked off in a corner by himself, his hat pulled well down over his eyes. He bore a striking resemblance to the members of the I.R.A., those indiscriminate-looking gentlemen I had encountered on the boat from Holyhead to Kingstown. So like them was he that I wondered why on earth such a person should be attempting the crossing from Larne to Stranraer.

At the other side, we found there were no sleepers on the train, indeed only three first-class compartments. However, only two of these had been taken. A third remained unoccupied, in a corner of which I settled myself. Following my lead, my acquaintance deposited her belongings in the corner opposite. That settled me. Loath to be forced

for many hours into such close companionship, I hailed a nice-looking woman, whom I had noticed scanning anxiously about for a vacant seat. She thanked me gratefully, and permitted me to lift her belongings into the third corner. She proved to be an American Red Cross worker just fresh from Serbia, now on her way back to London from a week-end with her father's people in one of the Northern Counties. The train was already moving when the fourth corner, still vacant, was precipitately seized by the young man with whose uncouth appearance I had been intrigued on the boat. He was not, apparently, a Sinn Feiner, or if he were he camouflaged his identity with a strong Cockney accent. Be that as it may, he knew Ireland from end to end, every nook and corner. Instinct, however, warned me to be reticent when this new acquaintance plunged into a passionate denunciation of Ireland and the Irish.

Sometimes a rush of information, told with intense earnestness, will not only emphasize the sincerity of an individual but will vindicate the accuracy of his statements. Thus it was with this young man, who was so evidently in earnest and tried so little to embroider the facts he sought to present, that he convinced me of their accuracy almost against myself. More than this, he confirmed much that I had already heard from extreme as well as moderate lips.

I wish that I could report him word for word. Unfortunately I can only record the gist, the high-water-marks which stood out, and which I was

able to jot down hastily, without being detected, on the edge of a newspaper. Ireland, North and South alike, he declared, was overrun with Bolshevist agents : he described miraculous escapes, interviews with prominent leaders, related an anecdote here or there which added weight to his statements. Full he was of the significance of what was taking place. And of this Ireland he was remorselessly contemptuous.

" Whatever comes, I, for one, will never raise a finger to help Ireland. She can be allowed to stew in her own juice. Rather, I would fight against the shedding of a single drop of British blood on Ireland's behalf."

His voice shook with passionate resolve, and his face was tense and haggard with emotion. His patience evidently had been provoked to its farthest limit.

Meanwhile, the young lady was listening quietly. She made few comments, but I felt her scrutiny directed constantly upon me.

About four o'clock in the morning the boy cleared into the next-door compartment, whose occupants had already alighted, where he was joined not long afterwards by the young woman. I walked up and down the corridor for a bit, making note each time I passed their compartment of the absorbing conversation into which, from the tail of one eye, I could see my two acquaintances were deeply plunged.

We assembled for another chat an hour or two before reaching London, to listen while the American

Red Cross nurse gave us a graphic account of her experiences in Serbia.

As we pulled into Euston the boy departed much as he had come, with a cheery good-bye and a light wave of his hand. But the young woman lingered, apparently to toss at me a final query, "Where are you staying?" adding, as if to explain the impertinence, "I want to know because I should like to send you some papers that may interest you."

She was as good as her word, and several days later appeared at my hotel. In the meantime, however, I had come down with 'flu, so I sent a note suggesting that she lunch with me the following week.

When she turned up the following week, she informed me that she was returning the next day to Belfast, "contrary to her expectations," on a special job connected with the Home Office of Northern Ireland. I was not surprised. From the first, I had been reasonably convinced that her attention to me had been inspired by the suspicions which the Northern Government entertained on my behalf.

It was now August. The attack of 'flu kept me in London, instead of carrying out my intention of proceeding immediately to Scotland.

London in mid-summer is at its least attractive season. Those who can afford have departed, either for the shooting in Scotland, or to sun themselves at the seashore or in the mountain districts of the

Continent. Official London has vanished. At the end of a long season the City is dashed and tired, the Parks dusty and showing signs of hard use. How wet those weeks were; dreary too, and cold. Still, the quiet of the hotel, and the absence of my friends, gave me an opportunity to determine what course it was now best to follow.

Often as I turned over the pages of the newspaper for Irish news, and witnessed the elaborate space given to the least consequential of Irish agitators, I wondered how it had been possible for certain persons to carry on such important activities without attracting suspicion to themselves.

After a fortnight of rain, we were rewarded with a torrent of sunshine. On August 22nd I found myself walking down Piccadilly, my mood cheered by the bright morning. Opposite the Ritz my attention was caught and held, by a hand-cart piled high with beautiful yellow bananas. The sight responded to a craving I had felt for days, an indeterminate longing for I knew not what, of a kind which comes after illness to pester and elude, and which was satisfied immediately by the mere sight of those bananas. I relieved the vendor of a half-dozen of his fruit, and turned into the grateful shelter of the Green Park to enjoy a quiet feast. As I did so, a Special Edition was thrust in front of me by the newspaper man who makes a stand at the Piccadilly entrance of the Green Park. Staring at me, in huge headlines, was the announcement of Michael Collins' death which had occurred early that morning. He had been shot in an ambush

near Macroom, that fatal district already made famous as the scene of the murder of the seventeen English cadets. Some people have called it poetic justice; to me, from the moment when the news added weight to the pressure of Irish problems, it was one of that Romantic Lady's greatest tragedies, and one of her most scathing paradoxes. The hands which had put him where he was had struck him down, as they had threatened. Was this *love of Ireland*, or hatred of the British Empire?

This calamity warned me to lose no time if I was to accomplish what I had determined.

During one of my last days in Dublin I had received a call from a woman quite unknown to me, who said she had been sent by a gentleman from whom I had received many courtesies. She arrived one morning about ten o'clock, inviting me to share an early lunch. It was an off-day for me, so her invitation found me free. Without delay she plunged into the political situation, although her opinions were merely a repetition of what I had heard over and over. Before we parted, however, she surprised me by casually handing me a sealed envelope bearing an Irish name, under which was written an address in Chelsea, S.W., with the careless comment, "Perhaps you may some time find this letter of use." Afterwards, I tucked it away in my case with other letters, and promptly lost all recollection of it. However, before setting out on this morning of Collins' death, I had run across it as I was clearing out my

case. For some moments I turned it over, idly debating whether I should bother to make use of it. But now that no stone should be left unturned, I decided to run over to Chelsea the same afternoon.

About three o'clock I found myself standing in front of a modest house, one of a row in a little Chelsea side-street. A tall, dark, intelligent-looking woman responded to my ring. While I explained my errand, the meantime offering her the letter, I realized that her attention was absorbed in looking me over from head to foot. At such times details thrust themselves into one's consciousness, and I noticed that she was dressed in a fashion dating back to the beginning of the century. Her blouse met her black skirt at the normal waist-line, while the muslin was unabbreviated and closed tightly about her throat. After a moment of quiet thought, she ushered me into a small sitting-room to the right of the doorway. As she walked past me to a door at the back of the room, I had a chance to take in more fully her amazing figure and dignified carriage. For a woman she was immensely tall, and slim, even elegant, while her dark eyes, unusually large, combining with her dark hair, emphasized the pallor of her face, with its finely drawn, clear-cut features.

I waited perhaps five minutes, admiring the restrained and simple comfort of the room. Through the slightly raised window, I could see scarlet geraniums profusely covering the edges of their dark green window-boxes.

The door at the back of the room was reopened and an elderly woman entered alone. She must have been well over seventy, although her carriage was as erect and dignified as that of the younger woman from whom I had gained entrance. Her hair was her crowning beauty, piled high above her forehead, and softened by a bit of white lace stuff, framing her face and falling over her ears to her shoulders. Her dress was black, and she held a soft woollen shawl tightly drawn about her. I saw at once that she was a woman of energy and deliberation, nor did the fire flashing from her dark eyes escape me. She received me kindly, with the softest of brogues, leaving the impression, unexpressed in words, that she had been expecting me. Of course, we chatted about Ireland; it seemed the natural thing to do. She asked me what parts I had visited, and I noticed that her forehead knit involuntarily when I mentioned certain prominent names. We talked thus for some time, during which I had a vague sense—by now not a novel experience—of being summed up, measured and tabulated. Still, her manner had no trace of impertinence, but was dignity, nay, gentleness itself. Not merely did she know her country well, she loved it, and what was significant, avoided all mention of its present difficulties. She even displayed little or no curiosity about them, unusual in an Irishwoman, for the Irish as a rule are introspective and enjoy talking and thinking about themselves. After tea I took my leave; as we shook hands there was warmth in her invitation to "come again."

For days afterwards, I found this elderly woman in complete possession of my thoughts. I could not rid my mind of her, or explain why she was living in London, when her real home was in Tipperary. It would have been easy to call a spade a spade and dismiss conjecture from my mind, but I was living in a world of unrealities, where I could ill afford to dispense with the faintest lights and shades.

A week later I was delighted to find a note awaiting me at the breakfast-table, with a Chelsea post-mark, bidding me to tea again that afternoon.

A wrong turning on the way to Chelsea brought me to my destination half an hour late. I found my hostess in another room on the second floor, this time not alone. Near her sat a man of about sixty years, with a neatly clipped, Van Dyke beard. He responded to our introduction with a slightly foreign accent—he was, it happened, of Polish origin—which dropped from him in a measure as we chatted.

Our conversation was unimportant enough, but again I had that profound sense of being measured, weighed up and tabulated. While Ireland was scarcely mentioned, I could not rid myself of the impression that with her concerns these two people were vitally bound.

Some days later I was dining with some New York friends in a little Soho restaurant, a place noted for its cooking and the Bohemian character of its patrons. Our order given, we settled down to a survey of our fellow-diners, when I felt myself

the object of attention from a table in one of the far corners of the room. It was then I imagined I recognized the old Pole, who, for some reason, appeared slightly altered. As our eyes met, he looked quickly away. I took the hint and followed his lead. His smartness, at our first meeting, had now entirely disappeared ; gone the grey waistcoat and the white spats. He was dressed in the shabbiest of old suits, quite in keeping with the attire of his companion, who also looked foreign.

I persuaded my friends to prolong the meal, watching the table in the far corner of the room as inadvertently as possible. At eleven, or thereabouts, they paid their bill and started to go.

As the old man passed my table on his way out, I fancied I caught a faint glimmer in his eyes. Was it my imagination, or the uncanny youthfulness of those eyes, which made me suspect the white beard and hair were only camouflage ?

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CHAPTER XXI

THE SHADOW OF A SPIDER

Had my Chelsea hostess not mentioned at our last meeting a forthcoming absence "of a few weeks," I might have been tempted to delay my journey to the North further, for with her presence, London for the moment offered a special bribe.

My objective in the North was Glasgow, although I had promised myself a few days of leisure in a quiet village on the extreme West Coast; a village quaintly styled Tayvallich, eighteen miles from Ardrishaig, which, by a narrow span of land, adjoins the Crinnan Canal, known to most travellers in the Western Isles. Tayvallich, ancient as is its lineage, boasts but a single row of houses stretching the length of one side of a long narrow road, which in its turn, skirts the edge of a salt-water loch, one of many irregular branches of the sea, winding in and about the jagged rocks of this wild western shore.

A rough mile from the village, along the same road, a tiny cottage shelters under the lee of a bare heather-covered hill. From its doorway, one can look beyond crag and loch far into the distance, to what, on a fine day, is the barely distinguishable outline of the Irish coast. As the crow flies, it is not far to the Giant's Causeway, connected by that

romantic water-way, the Mull of Kintyre. As the coach passed over the brow of the hill, the mistress of this tiny cottage came towards us waving her apron. She was an old friend of my childhood, tried and true, long a member of my mother's household, who, late in life, had married the sweetheart of her youth, a crofter, as his father and his father's father had been before him.

My Highland visit is important for only one reason. Several days after my arrival, I returned from one of my long excursions to find the little family in a state of excitement. As they were lingering over their tea, a stranger came knocking at the door, and, speaking with a slightly foreign accent, asked for a cup of water. Following an instinct of hospitality innate in all these Highlanders, they offered him milk instead, which he sat down to drink, the meanwhile warming his feet comfortably at the fire. They chatted at random for twenty minutes or so, when the stranger enquired leisurely if any visitors were staying round about. Mary, immediately on her guard, had answered, "No, the place is empty of visitors this year." She recounted this with satisfaction, by way of explaining how she had not liked the man, and had wanted to be rid of him. Something in his aspect had recalled the German spies who came up their way during the war.

This incident, trivial as it was, provided food for thought. Shadow of my spider, I thought to myself that evening, as I sat before the roaring fire. Yet, I was wholly surprised that anyone should

consider it worth his while to undertake so long and futile a journey.

The next day was beautiful, clear as crystal and fresh as dawn. Armed with a bottle of new milk and scones, I started off early, intending to spend my day wandering about the rocks above a delightful inlet known as Carsaig Bay.

Five miles across water from Carsaig Bay lies the Island of Jura, on which rise the three magnificent Paps of Jura. What a glory the day was! The sun was reflecting itself brilliantly in the water, on the rocks too, until the bits of malachite embedded in their surface glittered like tiny diamonds. Every clump of heather on Jura stood distinct, yet, for miles, there was not the faintest sign of human movement.

Towards noon I was attracted by a small row-boat, winding its way from the narrows of Jura Sound into the safer and more sheltered waters of Carsaig Bay. It was some moments before I could determine whether one person or two sat at the oars. But, as the small craft drew nearer, only one person became visible, and he resembled the description Mary had given me of the stranger who had "stoppit bye" the afternoon before. At that distance something in his quick movements struck me as familiar, yet I could not for the life of me have said how, or why. I watched this newcomer tie his boat securely to a small pier jutting some few feet into the water at the right-hand corner of the bay, and then walk deliberately across the pebbly shore far over to his left, where, without

hesitation, he struck a pathway leading over the hills and across the moors to the rocky hill overhanging Mary's cottage. It occurred to me he must have been familiar with the lay of the land to find this path, inasmuch as a wrong turning would have landed him in a peat-bog.

It was then two o'clock. Even with this fresh incident about which to speculate, I suddenly realized that I was aching with hunger.

There is no more pleasant sensation than to eat fresh scones and drink new milk lying on a bed of heather, overlooking a Scotch loch, with the sun pouring down upon one like a benediction. The smell of the sea mingles with the warm scent of the sweet fern, and that quite indefinable and elusive smell of the heather. Thoroughly satisfied, I lay for another couple of hours watching the sea-gulls circle over the bay, or strut in the precise manner they have up and down the irregular beach; listening, too, to the echo of their wistful cries, which are mindful of the sea and open spaces. Even here, where all was beauty and peace, I could not escape, casual wayfarer that I was, from the mad activities of men.

> "Words are so slight! And yet one word will make
> The wide air quiver endlessly, and wake
> The waves of sound to ceaseless, fruitless quest
> Of some far-distant shore whereon to break."

The sun was sinking low, leaving the sky dim for the on-coming of evening, a long and beautiful interlude in Scotland, when the stranger of the

morning emerged from the same direction in which he had been lost to sight. I watched him pick his way carefully over the stones and rocks back to his boat moored at the pier. This time he was accompanied by a companion, another stranger, about his own height and build. It may have been mere fancy, but in the gathering gloom I imagined that he, too, looked familiar. From my look-out I saw them get into the boat and shove off. Then I lay waiting, until the wee craft was but a speck and their voices, rhythmic as the splash of their oars, drifted back, dim echoes, across the water.

I found the little family more disturbed than on the preceding night. Mary, returning at noon from her work in the fields, had found the mysterious stranger sitting in full possession of the kitchen fire. My own bag and miscellaneous belongings were in a room directly opposite the kitchen, which Mary, bidden by her Scottish instinct, had carefully locked and bolted that morning before leaving. Only when the stranger had been left alone for a few moments with the small daughter, a child of ten, had he made further enquiries. But from this source he got little satisfaction : the child had followed her mother's lead and been discreetly non-committal. All were convinced, however, that this man was intent on tracing my whereabouts, a conclusion I could not banish from their minds.

For the rest of my visit we were left undisturbed, and at length the mere notion that I had been followed seemed but a far-fetched supposition.

Following the kindly suggestion of the Governor of the prison ship in Belfast Lough, I presented his card of introduction immediately on my arrival in Glasgow. I do not feel at liberty to disclose the name of this gentleman; suffice it, he was a high official, still holding office in that ancient city.

After a short wait, I was bidden to return at two o'clock on the same afternoon.

On the stroke of the hour I was ushered into a spacious room at the end of a long corridor. As the door was swung open, a tall, well-set-up man arose from his desk to greet me. My errand explained, I found my acquaintance, for reasons of his own, quite as interested as I in Ireland and the Irish.

Irish activities in Scotland, prior to the Treaty, had been legion, largely because of the increasing influx of Irish people into Glasgow. A few well-to-do Irishmen resident in Scotland, who before the Treaty had sympathized with the agitation for a Republic, were now ardent Free Staters. Their change of heart was influenced by the strong Bolshevist tendencies of a certain element in Sinn Fein. Nor had contact with the Irish increased the affection felt for them in Scotland, because, fundamentally, the Scotch believe all Irish people are one at heart. I asked why so many Irish labourers were at work in outlying districts of Scotland, in Glasgow, too, for that matter.

"Chiefly because work in Ireland has been scarce," he answered, "and because the Irish workman makes fewer demands on the pocket of the employer than

the Scotch workman. Several of the large ship-owners of Belfast, with ship-building concerns on the Clyde, import their employees from Ireland, for reasons of economy partly, and to help on the Irish cause. Among the Irish drifting in are many foreigners.

" My position here keeps me in touch with much that is being attempted in Scotland. Strange things will often happen. On the eve of a ' stunt,' members of the group responsible for it will come in and *deliberately* give the whole show away. They come of their own accord—a breach of faith of which no Scotsman or Englishman would ever be guilty.

" The Treaty has done good because it has defined the Sinn Fein movement more clearly ; shown people on the outside what forces are at the bed-rock of Sinn Fein. Those of us closely in touch with things up here believe that Bolshevism and Republicanism are synonymous."

This gentleman believed " in letting such folk stand on a soap-box and shout themselves hoarse if they want to. They can do no harm, and we know then what they are thinking."

The leader of the Sinn Fein movement in Glasgow had originally been a Professor in the University. For acts of violence in his early career he had been imprisoned, then let out later. After worse offences he was again put behind the bars. Thus, from one extreme he had gone to another, but in reality he possessed little organizing ability ; like all revolutionaries, he was destructive rather than

constructive. As for the sources of aid, extremists in the British Isles got help mainly from America. It was the measured opinion of this official that Lloyd George had been largely guided in his Irish policy by a desire to prove to the United States what an extraordinarily difficult people the Irish are to govern.

As for the Labour Party and their effect on the Irish situation, the settlement had removed one of their chief sources of grievance. Labour leaders themselves had no desire for office until they had men trained for power. "More than once they have told me privately, that their men were not yet fit for the job. During the war, recruits to the ranks of Labour increased far in advance of the party organization, which must now assume the task of educating the ranks. The Bolshevist element in Scotland, Liverpool, Manchester and London has been large for years past, and is honeycombed with agents from the outside. The only means of combating the growth of doctrines dangerous to the commonweal is eternal vigilance."

As I rose to leave, I was again handed one of those magic cards without which this voyage of discovery would have been a lamentable failure, with the explanation, by this time bromidic, "You may find this of use." I noticed that the envelope into which the card had been hastily slipped, bore a name quite unfamiliar to me. Again I marvelled at the curious twistings and turnings of this long and eventful quest for knowledge.

CHAPTER XXII

IRISH CATHOLICS AND A SOVIET REPUBLIC

I DID not go back to London immediately, but embarked upon my third and last journey to Ireland to spend a few days with Sir Francis Stronge, brother to Sir James, who since his retirement from diplomacy had settled at Rostrevor, a small village in County Down.

Near-by was the town of Newry, long the centre of a vast deal of anarchy and violence, a perfect butting-post between the North and South. It was here that the first serious outrage occurred in Ulster, when on July 6th, 1921, Loyalists were taken from their homes and shot by the roadside. The appearance of the town did not belie its reputation ; but, on the contrary, offered a more concrete expression. A mediæval chill hung about the place, which clung to the grey stone of the houses, and was not to be dispelled by sunshine be it ever so radiant. I have a faint remembrance of drawn blinds or tight shutters, and of a slight shiver running over me as we drove through the deserted streets.

Rostrevor across the river is more homely, although, like Newry, it is peculiarly fitted for the activities of a rebel army. That part of Leinster lying beyond the small loch, Carlingford, is by way of being a hot-house for the nurture of intrigue.

Curiously, the name of Leinster has long been associated with revolutionary sentiments, since the Duke of Leinster, the tale runs, was ducked at Oxford for a fervid expression of advanced views.

There was a long drive from Newry before we turned into the roadway which led, with many winding twists and turns, to the white steps of the Stronge mansion. In the afternoon light, the house stood out pale and weather-worn against a background of overhanging foliage. As a fact, the place was emerging from a long period of neglect, during which it had neither lost its dignity nor yielded its pride. The great stone pile sat as it had sat for centuries, basking in the sunny stillness, quiet and undisturbed, the front approach surrounded by rock gardens to the edges of which pressed the rich meadows of the park.

As we assembled for tea, laid out before a blaze of logs in the sitting-room, I advanced with urbanity to a small parrot sitting motionless upon a single, railed perch. The creature was alive, and friendship was not among its cardinal virtues. I withdrew my hand in time to avoid a collision, while my host explained that the bird had been his constant companion for more than two decades. Its age was reputed to mark a century at least, hence its hostility. Even to a parrot the years bring disillusionment. Nature had in the meanwhile grown weary of providing fresh *habillement*; its feathers were distinctly mouldy.

At tea-time Lady Stronge, spanning the gap which separates the old Ireland from the new, harked

back to the days when her country was a happy playground, because life was simpler there than elsewhere in the United Kingdom; when they hunted together and visited one another, and farmed in a leisurely sort of way. Blissful days were those, which time had cloaked with illusion—an illusion which these later years had helped in no slight measure to sustain.

Lady Stronge, who, in her own words, "left politics to others and bothered not a whit about religion," was one of the first daughters of a noted Irish family to break away from the seclusion of home life, when in her twenties she had departed to study painting in London and Paris. How softly she laughed as she recalled the doleful prophecies of the "maiden aunts"! The passage of the years had in no way penetrated her calm. By nature she was a philosopher, a close associate of the simple things of life, and a lover of humble folk. Under her sure and skilful hand, the tapestry of this older day grew to momentous proportions; the hunts, the intrigues inevitable amid abundance of wit and beauty, all showed the picturesqueness of a life whose charm still lingers over the Irish country-side. Days which are gone for ever in sacrifice to a new Ireland, which can no longer afford to slumber on to the tune of laughter and tears.

A cousin of Sir Francis was staying, like myself. He had been a Colonel in the Army, but since the war had farmed his estate. He was too practical to live on dreams, and his bitterness, had it not been inspired by the miseries of his friends, would

have been exotic. Lloyd George had made a Treaty with "cut-throats" and "murderers." He quoted a young New Zealander who, after visiting Ulster, had promised to tell them in New Zealand that England must never be expected to stand by her own people, after the way in which she had turned her back on the Loyalists in Southern and Northern Ireland. In this young man there was no instinctive reaction to the onerous burden of a vast Empire, whose parts, if they are to unite into the perfect whole, allow for no rough edges. So the Colonel's bitterness ran on, crude, unleavened, not permitting him to take Sinn Fein with sufficient earnestness to see therein the eternal seeds of destruction and despair. He was a typical example of the slow-burning wrath which has settled in the souls of all extreme Irish people; and in the nature of things will smoulder on and on into the future. Between these extremes, Sinn Feiner on the one hand, die-hard Ulsterman on the other, there lies only the difference of direction, for in their effect upon men and movements there is nothing to choose.

But the object of my visit was to meet prominent Irish Catholics, a rare preponderance of whom lived in this region bounding on Newry. Of them all, Sir John Ross-of-Bladensburg, as head of one of the most prominent Catholic families in all Ireland, was of greatest importance. One of his brothers had entered a Catholic Brotherhood years before, while a sister had long since taken vows.

Sir John was tall and magnificently erect, culture refining every aspect of him. In his soft Irish tweeds, a dark tam o' shanter set jauntily on his snow-white hair and a long dark cloak thrown loosely about his shoulders, he was a figure of uncommon distinction. The heavy knotted stick, with which he toyed as he walked, increased rather than detracted from the vigour of his spirit.

His estate defies a just description. The house itself was over-large for comfort, and there was a chapel attached for devotions. As for the gardens, they were not laid out in the usual Irish manner; one missed great rolling stretches of park, although for recompense there had here been assembled the most remarkable collection of shrubs and plants in the British Isles.

Sir John by no means stinted his condemnation of affairs in Ireland. Not even the Catholic hierarchy escaped his biting criticism for their inertia in not preventing bloodshed and excesses.

"The duty," remarked Sir John, "of a Government is to govern. Because the British Government in Ireland has failed to govern, it has forfeited the right to be called a *Government*. It was while Augustine Birrell was Chief Secretary for Ireland that Carson ran his guns into Larne. I went to Birrell to urge him to put Carson under immediate arrest. Had this been done the storm provoked by the gun-running would have been stifled, and all excuses for reprisal measures on the part of Southern Ireland removed."

In a storm of anger Sir John split with Birrell.

With Asquith he had little sympathy, with Lloyd George still less. In this last antagonism, however, he showed the prejudice which was the ruling passion of his life, for Sir John was in no sense a democrat. He granted no rights to the " people," insisting fiercely, that the policy of the Catholic Church in frowning upon educational movements was not merely logical, it was right. Members of a Government should, in his opinion, only be chosen from the governing classes. " If they come from the midden, to the midden they will return," declared the fierce old man. Not that he did not respect the people as people ; it was simply his conviction that privileges are beyond the reach of those not born in the sphere to receive them naturally, and be taught the use of them.

By a strange irony here was another person who believed that Bolshevism threatened the foundations of civilized institutions in Ireland, although to Sir John's way of thinking, the turmoil prefaced the failure of democracy the world over.

" Democracy in America has failed. Wherever it is tried it will fail—no good can ever come of it."

His attitude in these matters was difficult to analyse. Whether it was the product of his religious beliefs or of his temperament, one would have had to know him long and intimately to determine. To find such a doctrine, in its essence so diametrically opposed to the liberality of those other landlords with whom I had been associating, at the very heart of Catholicism, was but further

evidence of the inconsistency of that gigantic institution. At a glance it seemed, too, an extreme instance of the isolation of which Ireland is an outstanding victim. Eyes turned perpetually inward produce a vision divorced from, and out of harmony with, the currents of active life. At tea-time, when Charlie Chaplin was mentioned casually, and Lady Ross, with a slight lift of her brows, enquired, "Who is Charlie Chaplin?" her bewilderment bespoke, more clearly than words, the cloistered character of her life.

Such conservatism was not snobbery, however. I could hardly imagine a pair less branded with that stigma than these two elderly folk. Instead, it sprang from an honest conviction that people are born in certain spheres for certain tasks. But it was trebly significant that such an out-worn doctrine, which could never have survived in England or Scotland, was not only growing, but flourishing in this Irish soil, side by side, too, with Catholicism, which is distinctly a religion "of the people."

At this time there was staying with the Ross' a gentleman who had been assistant to Sir John while the latter was Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police of Dublin, from whom I heard intimate details of that episode in 1914, when the guns were run into Howth Bay by the Childers and their friends. Word came to Headquarters between one and two o'clock on that famous Sunday afternoon, July 26th, 1914, that a consignment of guns was being met at Howth Bay by a body of republican

sympathizers. The events which followed are now old history, but I was given to understand that this gun-running was the first open indication that the Government had of a movement which had long been creeping stealthily underground.—Strange that it should be so, for as I listened a picture came before me, one of the many in Jack Yeats' Dublin Exhibition, showing the hold this new fervour had already taken on the minds and imagination of at least a section of the Irish populace. A girl was passing the fenced garden of one of the Sinn Fein victims of that Sunday afternoon. She had tossed a rose lightly over her shoulder, and was glancing furtively back to where it lay, its red brilliance and the perfection of its outline dominating the whole canvas.

Sir John's assistant, reflecting as he did the feeling of bewilderment shared by those who were in authority in Dublin in 1914, presented still another aspect of the Irish muddle. Why such an incident was white-washed by the Asquith Government, and why, until 1916, a more determined effort was not made to check this intrigue, will doubtless remain a riddle unsolved till a much later day than ours. Perhaps, as some non-Catholics believed, the British Government would have done well to make use of the Catholic Church; yet, on the other hand, would the Church ever have allied itself with any Government, in Ireland or elsewhere, which had successively frustrated the efforts of that huge religious organization since the far-off days of the Spanish Armada?

This question was answered for me more or less through the lips of Monseigneur O'Reilly, the most influential member of the Catholic hierarchy in this region. He was one of the older priests, full of that quaint, self-contained bearing characteristic of Catholic clergy everywhere. He did not give an impression of culture, although immediately one measured his astuteness.

During the two hours when I was closeted with him, he enlarged freely on the situation in Ireland, tracing the movement some distance back, and dwelling at length on the tragedy of Redmond's final defeat—that pathetic, lonely figure, of whom the Monseigneur was a profound admirer. For he knew the Redmonds all intimately, and considered the failure of Redmond's movement Ireland's greatest calamity.

He gave unstinted praise to Ulster for their establishment of law and order. Because of this accomplishment, they had, in his opinion, more than justified the severe measures to which on occasion, they had been obliged to resort. This gradual steadying in the North he attributed to the predominating influence there of a middle class.

It was to the British, Monseigneur O'Reilly showed his inherited antagonism. "They are sly," he complained, "clever and unscrupulous, instinctively out 'to do' other nations. They have always 'done' the Irish."

Yet, hand in hand with this aversion was his conviction that the Church could afford to press

no further. "You see," he explained, "Catholicism is traditionally anti-British, because, since she ceased to be a Catholic country, Britain has always made it difficult for Catholicism to flourish."

At the same time, he would not allow that the Church was sympathetic to Sinn Fein, dismissing the enthusiasm of the younger priests with the comment, "They are but hot-headed youths."

Otherwise, Monseigneur O'Reilly confirmed the impression I had been given during those early weeks in Dublin, that the Church was indulging in a policy of watchful waiting before deciding on which side to throw the weight of its influence.

"Because," he continued, "we are now faced with the possibility of a Soviet Republic, which would in every sense be anti-religious. Bolshevism, you know, is the essence of atheism.

"Ten days ago 60,000 gold roubles were brought to Dublin from Moscow. While this sum in itself is small, it shows that money is constantly filtering through from Russia. Should we not move with the utmost care, the Catholic Church would find itself not smiled upon in other parts of the Empire. We go now wherever we wish, but ranging ourselves on the side of the extreme elements will put us in a dilemma. After all, there are other places as important as Ireland in the British Empire." Certain of the Colonies were mentioned. . . . So it was left for the Church to appreciate the full significance of "the Empire," or "Commonwealth of Nations."

As a priest, he had his own problem. The

reluctance of the Catholic Church to trim its ship had resulted in a distinct loss of prestige in the early days of Sinn Fein, to so alarming an extent that the movement had now got out of hand. People were not as easy to manage as they used to be, and at times he, as a priest, was at a loss for the right kind of disciplinary methods. Different from the old days, when a priest was assumed to occupy a place on the right hand of God.

"Have you come into close touch with outrages committed by the Black and Tans?" I asked.

"Ah, yes," and he embarked on a long story of a girl in his parish who had been shot during a raid on her father's house. "But then," he explained, "the shooting was accidental. It is doubtful by whom it was done."

He could not let Sir John Ross' anger against the Hierarchy pass unquestioned.

"The excesses of the Republicans," said he, "are the acts of the *people* themselves. We, as priests, are the servants of the people, and it is not our business to say 'yea' or 'nay' to their actions or desires. For myself, I come from the people, as do most of the other clergy, that is, the younger ones. Are we not right in associating ourselves with the feelings and aspirations of those who are really our class brothers? Would not you, reared in democratic America, feel the same way?"

Afterward, as I walked home with Sir Francis Stronge, he told me that Monseigneur O'Reilly was one of the most respected priests in the neighbourhood. All the same, Sir Francis showed

distinct surprise that the prelate had spoken of Irish difficulties so freely.

To me it was a revelation. What had previously floated in my mind as mere supposition, had now solidified into fact.

Meantime a General Election was pending in England. I always associate this visit to the Stronges, with a prophecy made by my host as to the identity of the future leader of British politics. Was the impending General Election to put a Labour Minister into 10, Downing Street, as Mrs. Childers had believed, or was Sir Francis correct when he remarked one morning, after a slow perusal of his London paper, that the new election, he thought, would mark the entry into the fore-front of politics of a certain Stanley Baldwin, a man comparatively young in years as well as in political experience ?

I spent a short time in Belfast following this visit to the Stronges. The city was, by this time, a net-work of military and police. Whole districts had been separated into small units, to correspond with which the Police Force itself had been divided. Each section was further re-inforced by troops.

I found people were still concerned over the situation in Southern Ireland. While quiet had settled over the North generally, and Belfast in particular, a high official admitted that Sinn Fein was a much bigger and more portentous

movement than he had until recently realized. He believed the actual centre was in the United States.

On the crossing to Ardrossan, I was much entertained by a conversation I overheard between two fellow-travellers. Both well on in years, one was a native of the Border Counties, strongly unsympathetic to Ulster, not because he was a Sinn Feiner, but because he shared the distaste for authority common to all Irishmen. His acquaintance was a different type, with more camouflaged opinions. He disliked Belfast as a place where "people killed each other for the love of God." Nor did he quite fall in with criticism of the Police Force, thinking the aversion to authority reflected the amusing character of the Irish people themselves. He named a man who had for years been on a certain beat in Belfast, who was extremely popular with every man, woman and child on his round, no matter in what direction lay their sympathies. He had tried more than once to puzzle out a reason for this officer's popularity. Then he remembered hearing only three phrases from his lips, "Well, well," "Indeed," "Now really." The analogy was obvious, and from my corner I joined in the laugh which followed. Was it after all in reticence alone that lay the only hope of popularity with the Irish ?

CHAPTER XXIII

AN HOUR

My journey back to London from Scotland was uneventful. A young East Indian, with a scant knowledge of English, and a married couple were my sole train companions. The East Indian was the travelling representative of a silk merchant in Bombay. Not of a highly cultured caste, he was thoroughly nonplussed by his contact with Western civilization, and regarded the world about him with an expression, wondering, uncomprehending, wistful, in which home-sickness was writ large. In one hand he held a brown paper parcel, tightly clasped. It proved to contain a bunch of very large and over-ripe white grapes, a share of which he insisted on pressing upon each of us. They were delicious grapes, when manners had helped one to blind one's eyes to their grimy exterior, but the gesture was too kind to be denied.

There were many threads to be gathered together in London. It was now the end of October ; talk of a General Election floated on everyone's lips. I still had that sense of anticipation, of waiting for something which would give me the key to the situation across the Channel. Even yet, the suspicion hovered in my mind that I might be indulging in wild speculation.

During these weeks, I had been following the threads of my web to their centre, forced into the unhappy plight of working inward from the outside. It gave the same sensation as reading a story backwards. While I had come within the hovering shadow of my spider, I lacked proof to convince even myself. Although I had laughed off Mary's alarms in Scotland, in my own mind I had not a flicker of doubt that her unwelcome visitor had, for reasons of his own, tracked me as far as Tayvallich. Naturally the only explanation I could give was the possibility that, in my wanderings, I had fallen on the fringes of a secret shared by few. In all these matters instinct had so far proved the safest guide, and now instinct whispered I was not yet at the end of my quest; bade me tarry a bit longer. . . . With little more reasoning, I dropped a line to the elderly lady in Chelsea.

London was full of people, although the main activity centred in the constituencies where the election would soon be fought.

At our last meeting, an official had urged that I see Mr. Ronald McNeill,[1] a noted Ulsterman, now a prominent figure in British politics. Mr. McNeill received me with a frankness and a cordiality unusual in natives of the "Black North." He was one of those persons, rare in any country, possessing a remarkable capacity for throwing open the windows of his mind. A partisan, frankly a partisan, his partisanship was not unreceptive, nor

[1] Now Lord Cushendun of Cushendun.

was it perverse or ignorant. Thanks to him I saw Ulster in a fairer, gentler light. Nor shall I forget the second chat I had with him some weeks later, when, after the General Election, he became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Bonar Law's Government, and while he was acting Foreign Secretary in Lord Curzon's absence. Although his duties must have been extremely onerous, he yet spared the time to make clear one or two points in his book which lately I had been reading. Nothing bespeaks greatness in a man more, or a finer sense of his own importance, than his simplicity of bearing, at a time when his responsibilities would have justified him in passing over the demands of an inconspicuous traveller.

During these weeks I had several conversations with persons prominent in Government circles, of whom Bonar Law was one. They left delightful impressions, and while they helped me to understand more fitly the human side of this vast problem, they led me only indirectly to the source which I was seeking.

The day following the despatch of my letter to Chelsea, brought an answer, inviting me to present myself not later than ten o'clock on the following morning.

When I arrived, I seemed to detect suppressed feeling on the face and figure of the dark lady, now familiar, who answered my ring. Her expression was less mask-like, while her eyes seemed darker and larger than was customary.

Also I awaited my hostess rather longer than usual; in fact, before I was summoned to her presence I heard the front door close, and saw a young man walk hastily past the window.

I gathered that my elderly friend was moved by the same suppressed excitement as her factotum: at any rate, there followed one of the most amazing hours of my life.

Without waste of time or words she gave me a minute description of my journey through Ireland, whom I had seen and whom I had not seen; why certain people had been communicative, why other people had been reticent. In fact, these mysterious "other people" seemed to know more about my journey than I knew myself! As she concluded, my hostess warned me, "From now on, you must be very careful what you do and where you go. Unbeknown to yourself, you have embarked upon a game which is not child's play, in which the effort of each player wrings from him his heart's blood, so ardently does he believe in the righteousness of his task; but there are others whose every move is sinister and destructive."

At the conclusion of the hour, I was rather peremptorily shown that the visit was concluded. Naturally I was thoroughly bewildered. Why this good lady had unfolded in one direction without giving me reasons for her confidence, seemed—well, to say the least, strange. I still knew no more about her or her actual connexion with the revolution in Ireland than I had known on my

first visit. I could only suppose that she knew what she was talking about, inasmuch as what she said had bearing on my own observations. Was she assuming that I knew very much more than I actually did, or was she trying to frighten me from probing the mystery further? How the Irish gloated over their adventurous intrigue, I reflected. Yet, too, there had been an undercurrent of earnestness, more evident in her manner than in her words, that prompted me to take part, at least, of her warning seriously. I had a sudden wish to run over to Paris, but then, I pondered, were I to do that I should put myself out of touch with what was going on in London.

In the weeks that followed outrage continued to flourish in Ireland, and the two factions of Sinn Fein continued blindly to attack one another. As in every British political crisis, Ireland, even an Ireland at war with itself, had its usual bearing. Although the intense feeling of the Die-hards for the Loyalists had its share in the issue of the famous Carlton Club meeting, which brought the Bonar Law Government into power, under the new Ministry, for the thousandth time, expression was given of what is the ultimate continuity of British politics.

The Irish Treaty was due to come before the House of Commons in December, and already in November, debates had taken place. At one of these Sessions I was a fortunate onlooker. For the first time the Opposition Benches were occupied by the Labourites, under the leadership of Ramsay

MacDonald; the Galleries packed with visitors watching keenly the advent into power of this comparatively new Party, most of whom showed themselves a trifle unfamiliar with the time-honoured customs of the House. They were a heterogeneous lot, their ways a little resembling the unruly antics of the less moderate Deputies of Dail Eireann. In short, it was the period in the political life of the Labour Party when its ranks were not yet properly shaken down, and I fancied more than once that not the least embarrassed member of the new House was Ramsay MacDonald.

As for the Treasury Benches, there were certain figures there, too, who did not quite fit in with their newly acquired surroundings. Naturally, Bonar Law showed no trace of unfamiliarity. I can see him yet, comfortably sprawled out, his head leaning on the back of the bench, his feet gracefully resting on the table opposite. In some miraculous way, those long legs bespoke the character of the man. They had a grace which one associates with his personality, in keeping, too, with his wonderfully modulated voice. Already illness had lain a heavy hand upon him. But for lack of robustness in body he made up by a virulent strength of the spirit. Like Stevenson, he looked as if a breath would have blown him away, yet, about that slender figure, hung a determination, a tenacity, a clarity, seldom encountered in a politician. Actually it must have sprung from his quality of sterling sincerity.

Of the other personalities present that day, Sir

John Simon stood out for his power of exposition. He addressed the House at length, sentence following sentence with amazing and logical precision.

The Irish debate found the leader of the Opposition helpfully backing up Bonar Law and his colleagues to secure the passage of the Free State Bill, who, in turn, were supported by the most prominent members of the already waning Liberal Party.

Two discordant elements only, from the lips of an Ulster Member of Parliament, and a Parsee, the solitary Communist in the House, disturbed the even tenure of the discussion.

The first, the Ulster M.P., threw out an appeal for the Loyalists. "Let them at least understand," he pleaded, "that the House is not ignorant of the torture to which they have been subjected, and let it be fully understood by this House that things in Ireland in the past eighteen months, far from improving, have gone from bad to worse."

The Parsee, on the other hand, poured into the ears of an impatient House the same old arguments which had become a formula to the extremists in Ireland. "The Treaty was put through under duress." "A Republic must be had at all costs." "The signatures defacing the Treaty were wrung from heart-sick delegates." Then a change of tone. The shrill cry: "The workers must have their Republic." "To-day the prisons in Ireland are full, while Cosgrave is trying to put the Treaty through." "There must be self-determination, or no peace or fidelity." His voice rose to

anger as he continued. . . . " Cosgrave was the friend of his enemies and the enemy of his friends." He wound up with a flare of defiance. " What do I care if I stand alone? Wait till Labour is in power; then Ireland will get her freedom." The uproar which followed was quieted by the shouted comment of a Scottish member, " There are Die-hards on both sides of the House; most of them are not Die-hards—but *Blow-hards*."

Throughout the debate Lloyd George had sat attentive, a trained eye, twinkling and wonderfully alert, watching every corner of the House; although there were times when he glittered with amusement, for the most part he sat back, mischievous as Puck.

It was Bonar Law who struck the human note when he recalled a conversation he had had with Cosgrave; described the slight, wistful laugh which had accompanied Cosgrave's remark, " We may not live to see it, but the Treaty will go through. . . ." It resembled Michael Collins' own declaration in the wee hours of that bleak December night, that in signing the Treaty, " I am signing my own death warrant."

With tragic truth had these leaders spoken. Michael Collins already had taken his place in Kill o' the Grange, while Cosgrave, his successor, was a virtual prisoner in the Government buildings in Dublin.

CHAPTER XXIV

NOVEMBER DAYS

The November days dragged on. In the Free State official executions of Republican leaders were daily occurring, and Britain through a Conservative, preponderantly Die-hard Government, was backing up the pledge of its Coalition predecessor.

Gradually a long, sordid epic was drawing to its close.

Now it was that I felt myself shadowed. It was not as a sudden discovery, but one which pressed itself on my consciousness gradually in the recurrent feeling that I was surrounded constantly by familiar faces. In the midst of these sensations I ran across my old friend Mr. X, sitting quietly in the reading-room of the hotel, his brooding thoughts obviously blinding him to the world at his elbow. . . . We arranged to dine together the evening following, at a French restaurant round the corner.

The next night found him in an expansive mood, ready to chat at a round pace, wistful a bit over his butler, who had turned out to be a "Shinner" after all. . . . We lingered so long over our meal, that ten o'clock had struck when we wheeled the corner of Dover Street on our return to the hotel.

As we approached, I noticed a young girl standing near the post-box a few feet from the entrance. Her look was morose, yet eager and tense with watching. We drew nearer and her eyes glued themselves upon us, until a youth, standing muffled to the chin several paces behind, gave a low whistle and a jerk of his head to signal her away. She obeyed with obvious reluctance.

This incident, trivial though it was, jarred me, and for the following reason. The preceding night an aunt with whom I had dined, had strolled back with me to the door of the hotel. As she was turning away, her glance was arrested by the hasty movements of a young girl tripping lightly across the street. Concealing herself in the shadows, she watched the stranger enter the vestibule and stand looking, until I had picked up my letters and crossed the lobby to the lift. From her description, this was the identical person with whom we had just collided.

The next morning a dense fog hung over London, a thick yellow vapour which obscured all objects farther away than a few feet. In such weather it is impossible to follow or be followed.

In Dublin, the trial of Erskine Childers was proceeding day by day. Dry, colourless reports filled the newspapers. Until the end irony cloaked this figure. Fate, too, mocked with devilment the faith with which the English still regarded him. Nor was satire lacking in the effort made by his family in England, as well as in the United States,

to save him from reaping the harvest of his own deeds. Years of revolt and subtle intrigue against a Government whose interests he had ostensibly served during the war, had brought their own retribution. But the appeal failed. The Free State, responsible for the final decision, was too well able to measure the ramifications of his power.

Childers met his fate at the hands of those men to whose service he had given the best years of his life. . . . One by one they had all gone, or were going: Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Harry Boland, Cathal Brugha; before long, others would follow them; Rory O'Connor and the most prominent of his faithfuls. Not all going for the same reason, it is true, but vanishing for their various motives, leaving Ireland to enjoy peace for a generation or two.

So it came about, that in the chill of this grey November the New Ireland emerged from the ashes of the Old.

The fog lifted for a space. Again I became conscious that my movements were creating interest. I watched a tall six-footer with sandy hair pace restlessly up and down in front of the hotel one morning. To test the accuracy of my supposition, I issued forth on the pretence of shopping, as unobservedly as possible to watch his massive strides as they followed in my wake about the by-ways of the West End. When I turned and faced him he—vanished.

The same evening, another faithful, a bent old

man, chased me down the Strand on my way to a Republican meeting presided over by Mary McSwiney—incidentally, for the protection of whose right of free speech, Scotland Yard had sent a contingent of dependables.

The next day, fearing that Fate, having gone so far to favour me, would now play me false, I found my way out to Chelsea. The fog hung like a blanket, and no buses were running. Were it not for the skill and sagacity of the taxi-driver, I expect my best efforts would have been frustrated. After groping for some moments I found the bell, in my satisfaction pulling with undue fervour. But the sound, rebounding vehemently, brought no response. After a second ring, loud enough to awaken the dead but which elicited merely its own echo, I peered up at the windows. In the yellow gloom there was nothing to be seen. I felt the lower ones gingerly. If a policeman should find me trespassing . . .

Moved by a sudden thought, I struck a match, holding it as high as possible over my head, and by striking successive matches I could distinguish the rough edges of a board nailed firmly against the wood-work of a second-storey window. Chucking caution, I climbed up on to the pedestal of one of the posts supporting the lintel of the door, until, by the aid of more matches, I could just glimpse the words "TO LET," painted in large white letters on a dark background.

This was all very mysterious. I felt myself "getting warm." Fingering in my purse for a

handkerchief, my hand struck the card which had been given to me weeks before. It bore an address in the heart of London. I had been told by the donor that it was unnecessary to announce myself, and late as it then was I retraced my footsteps.

There was little difficulty in gaining admittance. I was ushered into a back sitting-room, where a tall, dark man, with a face of lean distinction, arose to greet me. That he was guarded and reticent I saw at once, nor did he divulge his mind until he had made certain of my identity.

CHAPTER XXV

"SHALL THE SPIDER-WEBS SWALLOW THEM?"

But for that hour—it might have been an hour or a week—the whole point of this tale would have been lost in an obscurity as murky as the London fogs. Here was knowledge distilled, each short, staccato sentence etching itself on my brain with the clearness of a sea-washed pebble. And as every thread and knot of the web stood forth, fine-spun with the eternal cleverness of the intriguer, there came to me the flash of supreme conviction. For a second I had glimpsed the spider, represented by the Third International, who sought to undermine Great Britain first with her Colonies, on a long journey whose final objective was the United States. Echo answered, "*Curiously enough, Ireland is the key-stone in the arch of the predatory system . . . it is simply, if Ireland goes, the whole structure will fall.*" So Britain was the predatory system.

No longer concerning myself with individuals, I saw the sweep of a larger rhythm, in which minor identities were lost. These months I had been as a dog trolloping behind a fox's cunning.

From the upheaval of those anxious weeks in Dublin arose two or three dominant figures. With a hasty twist of remorse I chided my own indiffer-

ence to the pitiless anxiety which had pursued the Loyalists, unbelievers in the New Ardour. And of these two or three dominant figures, the flower of their personality at last stood clear. One at least among them had a mind as sinister as it was alluring, with a special magic for Youth; who played this game with a cool and calculating eye. Someone so ruthless in purpose as to be left cold by suffering; someone who lived by mind and not by heart. I had heard of such people, but I had never before encountered them. Power such as theirs has moved empires, or shattered worlds. Under its sway the youth of Ireland, their eyes restive from having had for so long to notice painful things, were pressing on and on. . . . Blindly they had run, sweating with the fury of their effort.

As the story unfolded in all its complexity, I was chilled with the horror of it, particularly when I beheld the precision with which each player had been chosen for his rôle: dupes, pawns in the game. Collins for his powers of leadership; de Valera for his fanaticism; Liam Mellowes, Sean Moylan & Co. for their daring and zeal; Art O'Brien for his craftiness. So it could go on for ever. The heartbreak of Griffith's final awakening struck me afresh. Above all, the reasons for the determined retirement of the Childers from a position of prominence became finally apparent. They alone of all that group had brains capable of acting under and executing with intelligence, the wishes of a higher command. Had Mrs. Childers not

told me that she cared not a snap of the fingers for the freedom of Ireland ? . . . Certainly Michael Collins, as their intimate and close associate, must have realized what lay behind Ireland's dreams of Nationalism—Ireland, whom Comedy long since had marked for her own. If that were so, he would go down to posterity as one of the most heroic figures in Irish history, when he risked his life rather than turn his country over to the hands shaping its ruin.

As for the hollow-eyed zeal of Rory O'Connor, from the conversation I myself had heard, the full import of which I now grasped, he, too, must have understood towards what precipice Ireland was heading, he and Kathleen O'Brennen.

In the North the same influences had been at work, the ingrained antagonism and obstinate sulkiness of the native Ulsterman here used to create a seething bed of hatred and party strife.

All that is best and worst in Ireland had served as a cloak for the forces of destruction.

As I went into the bitter darkness of that evening, I realized that for the meantime my quest was over. Ah, this journey, it had been for me a drama ; by all the gods a drama of sensation, acted by the wiliest of creatures.

CHAPTER XXVI

AFTER SIX YEARS

After six years, it remains for me only to remove all doubt as to the purpose of my narrative. For the incredulous among my readers, it will not be less difficult than it was for me, to grasp immediately the full significance of the events and incidents which fill these pages. There will be those indeed who will never grasp them, who will oppose as sheer lunacy the mere suggestion that Irish Nationalism has been, and is to-day, the tool of foreign propagandists. To whom, I hope, others will retort, "Sheer lunacy with reason." My own conclusions, gathered among a series of vivid memories and impressions, were halting enough at the first, which is at once the weakness and the strength of my story. In fact the last i's were dotted and the last t's crossed, before I ceased to be conscious that I was worrying through to the finish of a problem, which had baffled and eluded other heads than mine. Across the gap of six years incidents which seemed trivial when they occurred, have become eloquent with meaning.

After luncheon on the day on which the Irish Treaty was signed, a close relative, dismayed by his pallor, remarked to Erskine Childers, "But you should be so happy, Erskine, your dreams realized!"

He merely shook his head in a gesture of profound despair.

The cause of this depression, so mystifying to those who knew his passion for Irish self-government, found expression in words which have already been quoted in Chapter X, "As far back as 1911 I urged the Dominion status for Ireland, the very position Griffith is upholding to-day. Since then the miseries of this little people have sent me marching forward and left him far behind."

In other words, somewhere between 1911 and 1922, a change occurred in the thought and intention of certain Irish leaders; which showed itself in intrigue of a most subtle and pervasive kind, destined for years to lie deeper than sleep and ultimately to come within an ace of getting its own way. So that the break in the Sinn Fein ranks which followed the signing of the Treaty, merely indicated that the doctrine of Sinn Fein, "Ourselves Alone," was no longer to be a selfish ideal, but should henceforth embrace struggling Nationals the world over. A spectacular move which drew to itself all who had then, or ever had had, or intended in the future to have, differences with Great Britain. Hence the open connexion between Suffolk Street and similar organizations in South Africa, Australia, Egypt, etc., with the Director of Publicity describing his own field work in all these countries. Nor did Rory O'Connor, "dark horse" in the struggle with the British, take the slightest pains to conceal the "underground" routes by means of which his most important

activities were made possible. Was it, therefore, surprising to hear Kathleen O'Brennen, one of the few Sinn Feiners with sufficient courage and honesty to admit of a Soviet connexion with Irish aspirations, boast of her association with Kuno Meyer, German agent in the United States during the early days of the war, to prevent the United States from coming into the war on the side of the Allies; as well as with the famous headquarters of a World Revolutionary Movement in Chicago?

As for Erskine Childers, figure of Romance and Tragedy, did not his wife and son declare that, had his activities during these years been known they would have been sufficient to warrant his hanging? So that one is led to believe that there was more in the Howth gun-running than a mere challenge to Carson. Such may or may not be the case. Yet, on the eve of civil war, those most intimately connected with the Republican organization were snapping their fingers at "freedom for Ireland," and declaring that Ireland was simply the key-stone in the arch of a system which they sought to undermine and hoped in time to destroy.

The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, now properly aroused, was at first secretly, then openly, running like a hare from the notion—to use its own words—of a "Soviet" Republic.

The events in the North during these years were the back-wash of the movement, the clever play on religion, on prejudice and ignorance resulting in an era of terror, which, when once launched,

befuddle all sense of right and wrong. Tactics cannot be ignored by the idealist.

The years which followed the challenge of 1914 were, for Ireland, formative years indeed, when a spider, identity to this hour only guessed, was already fastening the threads of its web over the entire face of that little country—threads secure enough to support immeasurable human interests—into whose meshes, spreading from outpost to outpost, may or may not yet be woven the destiny of a great Empire.

That Collins and Griffith, but more especially Collins, a disciple in the early days of those he now opposed, were aware of the nature of this struggle and the strength of the enemy, there is for me no shadow of doubt. By putting his name to the Treaty, Collins truthfully "signed his own death warrant." And when finally, he proved himself to be Irish first, last and always, they shot him in cold blood for the patriot he was.

Where in those days did the money come from? German and Russian gold were not unknown in Dublin during and after the war; and I was led to surmise, by the simple process that two and two make four, that the "zwei hundert tausand" of which Mrs. Childers spoke, were dollars from the United States of America.

Did I believe such a movement to be more than checked by the establishment of a Free State, it is unlikely that I should have troubled to record these adventures. Less than two years ago, the Irish Republican Army was actively flourishing

across the face of Ireland. During the past year, there has been the foul murder of Kevin O'Higgins to remind us that political assassination has not yet become mere history. Nor is it less significant that the murderer walks to-day in broad daylight, known to all, immune. . . .

Difficult as it may be to believe, the Republican organization in Ireland, with its invisible army, many of whose members are sincere, all of whom are brave, is for me, beneath the mask of idealism and reform, the bridge-head for revolutionary activities outside Ireland, whose aim is the complete destruction and annihilation of the British Commonwealth. This organization, which has its counterpart in every British Colony overseas as well as in the United States, subsists in Ireland on money drawn largely from sources in the United States of America. To what extent the donors are aware of the uses to which their subscriptions are put, is as problematical as the extent to which the Irish themselves are conscious that they are the catspaw controlled by a brain or nucleus of brains, constantly infusing life and vigour into this movement. Is it merely the vagaries of the Irish temperament, which enables a Free State member of the Dail Eireann of 1928, while admitting a Soviet connexion with Republicanism, to suggest that no peace will come to Ireland until de Valera is given the chance to form a " trial " Republic ? A " Soviet " Republic two hours from Britain would indeed be an experiment.

Undoubtedly the better organization of the

Communist party in Great Britain, into which money is constantly filtering from Russia, has helped the Soviet to centre its attack nearer the heart of their objective. Let, however, one wolf be killed in the open, the rest will scatter to cover, then who knows what use will be made of the Comrades in Ireland ?

I state the foregoing, not as random opinions, but as conclusions drawn from facts, clear proof of which evaded me when in Dublin I refused to become an agent and associate. Although it is doubtful if I could, even then, have obtained proof where proof may not exist. The strength of any secret organization must lie in the skill with which it avoids detection.

On the other hand, can my statements be disproven ?

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